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A SERIES
OF
TRACTS
ON THE
DOCTRINES, ORDER, AND POLITY
OF THE
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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
EMBRACING
SEVERAL ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

VOL. III.

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1

SINNERS

IN THE

HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD.

BY THE

REV. PRESIDENT EDWARDS.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

SINNERS

IN THE

HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD.

THERE is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.

By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had, in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.

The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations :

1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong, when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands.

He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty in subduing a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defence from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by: thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before Him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way; it makes no objection against God's

using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Luke xiii. 7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads; and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them, and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already." So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is. John viii. 23. "Ye are from beneath:" and thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law, assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell: and the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not at present very angry with them; as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth, yea doubtless with some who may read this book, who, it may be, are at ease, than he is with many of those that are now in the flames of hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand, and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whetted, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods, Luke xi. 21. The devils watch them; they are ever by them,

at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions, that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceedingly violent in their nature; and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out; they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruption, the same enmity, does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea. Isaiah lvii. 20. For the present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the troubled sea, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further;" but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints; whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger, in any respect, in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world, in all ages, shows this is no evidence that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen,

unthought of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world, and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear, that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or to go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of the world, are so in God's hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience do bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death; that, if it were otherwise, we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death; but how is it in fact? "How dieth the wise man? even as the fool." Eccles. ii. 16.

9. All wicked men's pains and contrivances which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do; every one lays out matters in his own mind, how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore, are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he forms plans to effect his escape better than others have done. He does not intend to go to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who heretofore have lived under the same means of grace, and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive; it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could come to speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell, ever to be the subjects of that misery, we, doubtless, should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here: I had arranged matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself; I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpectedly; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief. Death outwitted me: God's wrath was too quick for me. O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vain dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. God has laid himself under no obligation, by any promise, to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly has made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace, who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked: his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the execution of the fierceness of his wrath in hell;

and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment. The devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator; there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

APPLICATION.

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons to a conviction of their danger. This that you have heard is the case of every one out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor any thing to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person who is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you, as it were, heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink, and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf; and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you, and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you one moment, for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the

bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you, to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase, to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with: and do not willingly subserve any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of Him who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God they would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind, otherwise it would come with fury; and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are restrained for the present; but they increase more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.)

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string; and justice directs the arrow to your heart, and strains the bow; and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of

God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religious affections, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. ●

However unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety. Now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much in the same way as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet, it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep; and there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given, while you have been reading this address, but his mercy; yea, no other reason can be given why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner, consider the fearful danger you are in! It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the

fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

And consider here more particularly,

1. Whose wrath it is. It is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. xx. 2. "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion; whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul." The subject who very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison with the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing: both their love and their hatred are to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." Luke xii. 4, 5.

2. It is the fierceness of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isaiah lix. 18. "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries." So Isaiah lxvi. 15. "For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." And so also in many other places. Thus we read of "the

wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Rev. xix. 15. The words are exceedingly terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is unspeakably dreadful; but it is said, "the fierceness and wrath of God:" the fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! O how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them? But it is also, "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict; as though Omnipotence should be, as it were, enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. O! then, what will be the consequence? what will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it? whose hands can be strong; and whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk, who shall be the subject of this!

Consider this, you that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom; he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the execution of his wrath, or in the least lighten his hand: there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind: he will have no regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, than only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires: nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. "Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them." Ezek. viii. 18. Now, God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is passed, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end! for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other

use of this vessel, but only to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock:" "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Prov. i. 24—32.

How awful are those words of the great God, "I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." Isaiah lxiii. 3. It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, namely, contempt, hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favour, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot: and though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of Omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet, to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

3. The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict, to the end that he might show what that wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on his heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath, when enraged with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that

the burning, fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to show his wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" Rom. ix. 22. And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, even to show how terrible the unmixed, unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold the awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are afar off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isaiah xxxiii. 12—14.

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness, of the omnipotent God, shall be magnified upon you in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Isaiah lxvi. 23, 24.

4. It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer

this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity. There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration, before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your souls; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. O, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for, "Who knoweth the power of God's anger?"

\ How dreadful is the state of those who are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. \ O! that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! \ There is reason to fear that there are many who will read this book, or who have heard the gospel, who will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. \ If we knew that there was one person, and but one, of those that we know, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! \ If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! \ How might every Christian lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember these solemn reflections in hell! And some may be in hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some readers, who are now in health, and quiet and secure, may be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you who finally continue in a natural condition, who may keep out of hell longest, will be there in a little time! your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly, upon

many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in the land of the living, blessed with Bibles and sabbaths, and ministers, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned, hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands calling, and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the east, west, north, and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state with their hearts filled with love to Him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! to see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and to howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of those who are flocking from day to day to Christ!

Are there not many who have lived long in the world, who are not to this day born again, and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? O sirs! your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart are extremely great. Do not you see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the dispensations of God's mercy? You had need to consider yourselves, and wake thoroughly out of sleep: you cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God.

And you, young men, and young women, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as it is with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and

are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness.


And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many of the children of the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of great mercy to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls. (Never was there a period when so many means were employed for the salvation of souls, and if you entirely neglect them, you will eternally curse the day of your birth. Now, undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and flee from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over every unregenerate sinner. (Let every one flee out of Sodom: "Haste, and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."

THE END.

THE
SIN AND DANGER
OF
NEGLECTING
THE SAVIOUR.



PHILADELPHIA :
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THE
SIN AND DANGER
OF
NEGLECTING THE SAVIOUR.

READER,—

THIS little book comes to you with the most friendly intention, and addresses you upon a subject which involves in it every thing that is dear to you in time and eternity.

I. Ask yourself whether you have well considered your present state with respect to God and eternity. This Moses wished for the Israelites; “Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” Deut. xxxii. 29. It is the greatest folly in the world to leave the issues of these things to an uncertain hazard; and that man who cannot prevail with himself strictly to examine what is his state and condition with respect to eternity, never does any good, nor abstains from any evil in a due manner. Remember, therefore, that “many are called, but few chosen.” To be called, is to enjoy all the outward privileges of the gospel; yet this you may do, and not be chosen. Even among those to whom the word is preached, they are but few that shall be saved. In the distribution made by our Lord of the hearers of the word into four sorts, it was but one of them that received real benefit thereby. Many herein deceive themselves, until they fall under woful surprisals. And this is represented in the account of the sinner’s doom; for many of those who have professed the gospel, are introduced as complaining of their disappointment, Matt. xxv. 10—12. “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.” What is there spoken is only a declaration of what befell them here in the close of their lives, and their personal judgment thereon.

II. Take heed of being deluded by common presumptions. Most men have some thoughts, in general, about what their state is, and what it will be in the issue; but they make no diligent search into this matter, because a number of common presumptions do immediately insinuate themselves into their minds for their relief: and they are such, as that they are Christians; that they are in the right way of religion; that they are partakers of the out-

ward privileges of the gospel, hearing the word, and participating in the sacraments; that they have light and convictions, so that they abstain from sin, and perform duties as others do not, and the like. All those with whom it is not so, who are behind them in these things, they judge to be in an ill state and condition, whence they entertain good hopes concerning themselves; and this is all that most trust to. I shall not discourse on the vanity of presumptions; it has been done by many: I give only this warning in general to those who desire to be made partakers of Christ, that they put no trust in them; for if they do, they will eternally deceive their souls. This was a great part of the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist; "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father," Matt. iii. 9. This was their great comprehensive privilege, containing all the outward church and covenant advantages. These they rested in, and trusted to, to their ruin; herein he designed to undeceive them.

III. Consider aright what it is to live and die without an interest in Christ, without a participation of him. Where this is not seated in the mind, where thoughts of it are not continually prevalent, there can be no one step taken in the way towards him. Unless we are thoroughly convinced that without him we are in a state of apostasy from God, under the curse, and obnoxious to eternal wrath, as some of the worst of God's enemies, we shall never flee unto him for refuge in due manner. "The whole have no need of a physician, but the sick." Christ came, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:" and a conviction of this is the principal end of the ministry of the law. The misery of this state has been the subject of innumerable discourses; but few take themselves to be concerned in it. Let us tell men of it a thousand times, yet they either take no notice of it, or believe it not; they look on it as that which belongs to the way and course of preaching, wherein they are not concerned. These things, it seems, preachers must say, and they may believe them who have a mind thereunto. It is a rare thing that any one shall so much as say unto himself, "Is it so with me?" And if we now, together with this caution, tell the same men again, that, while they are uninterested in Christ, not ingrafted into him by faith, they run in vain; that all their labour in religion is lost, that their duties are all rejected, that they are under the displeasure and curse of God, that their end is eternal destruction, which things are unquestionably cer-

tain, yet will they let them all pass by without any further consideration.

Unless there be a full conviction in men of the woful deplorable condition of every person, of whatever quality, profession, religion, or outward state he is, who is not yet made partaker of Christ, all that I have further to add will be of no signification. Remember, then, that the due consideration hereof is to you, in your state, your chief concernment in this world; and be not afraid to take in a full and deep sense of it; for, if you are really delivered from it, and have good evidence thereof, it is nothing unto you but matter of eternal praise and thanksgiving. And if you are not so, it is highly necessary that your minds should be possessed with due apprehensions of it. The work of this conviction is the first effect of true religion; and the great abuse of religion in the world is, that a pretence of it deludes the minds of men to apprehend that it is not necessary; for to be of this or that religion, or of this or that way in religion, is supposed to be sufficient to secure the eternal state of men, though they are never convinced of their lost state by nature.

IV. Consider the infinite condescension and love of Christ, in his invitations and calls to you to come unto him for life, deliverance, mercy, grace, peace, and eternal salvation. Multitudes of these invitations and calls are recorded in the Scripture, and they are all of them filled up with those blessed encouragements which divine wisdom knows to be suited to lost convinced sinners in their present state and condition. It were a blessed contemplation to dwell on the consideration of the infinite condescension, grace, and love of Christ, in his invitations to sinners to come unto him, that they may be saved; of that mixture of wisdom and persuasive grace that is in them; of the force and efficacy of the pleading and arguments that they are accompanied with, as they are recorded in the Scripture: but that belongs not to my present design; this I shall only say, that, in the declaration and preaching of them, Jesus Christ yet stands before sinners, calling, inviting, encouraging them to come unto him.

This is the word which he now speaks unto you, "Why will ye die? Why will ye perish? Why will ye not have compassion on your own souls? Can your hearts endure, or can your hands be strong in the day of wrath that is approaching? It is but a little while before all your hopes, your reliefs, and presumptions will forsake you, and leave

you eternally miserable; look unto me, and be saved; come unto me, and I will ease you of all your sins, sorrows, fears, and burdens, and give rest unto your souls: come, I entreat you, lay aside all procrastinations, all delays; put me off no more, eternity lies at the door; cast out all self-deceiving reserves; do not so hate me, as that ye will rather perish than accept of deliverance by me."

These, and the like things, doth the Lord Christ continually declare, proclaim, plead, and urge on the souls of sinners, as it is fully declared, Prov. i. 22—27, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." He doth it in the preaching of the word, as if he were present with you, stood among you, and spake personally to every one of you; and because this would not suit his present state of glory, he hath appointed the ministers of the gospel to appear before you, and to deal with you in his stead, avowing as his own, the invitations that are given you in his name, 2 Cor. v. 19, 20, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Consider, therefore, his infinite condescension, grace, and love. Why all this towards you? Doth he stand in need of you? Have you deserved it at his hands? Did you love him first? Cannot he be happy and blessed without you? Hath he any design upon you, that he is so earnest in calling you to him? Surely not. It is nothing but the overflowing of mercy, compassion, and grace, that moves him herein. Here lies the entrance of innumerable souls into a death and condemnation far more severe than those contained in the curse of the law, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life," 2 Cor.

ii. 15, 16. In the contempt of this infinite condescension of Christ, in his invitation of sinners to himself, lie the sting and poison of unbelief, which, unavoidably, gives over the souls of men unto eternal ruin; and whom will they have to blame but themselves for their miserable doom?

V. Perhaps if you should, on his invitation, begin to look on him, and resolve to come to him, you are greatly afraid that, when it comes to the trial, he will not receive you; for no heart can conceive, no tongue can express, what wretched, vile, and provoking sinners you have been. That the Lord Christ will receive unto him such as you are, you have no hopes, or that ever you shall find acceptance with him. It is well, when persons come so far as to be sensible of what discouragements they have to encounter, what difficulties lie in their way, and what objections rise against them; for the most perish in a senseless stupidity. They will not consider how it is with them, what is required of them, nor how it will be in the latter end. They doubt not but that either they do believe already, or can do so when they please; but when they come so far as to charge the failure of their acceptance with Christ on their own unworthiness, and so are discouraged from coming unto him, there are arguments for their conviction and persuasion, which nothing but the devil and unbelief can defeat. Wherefore, that which is now proposed to consideration, in answer hereunto, is, the readiness of Christ to receive every sinner, be he who or what he will, that shall come unto him; and hereof we have the highest evidences that divine wisdom and grace can give unto us. This is the language of the gospel, of all that the Lord Christ did or suffered, which is recorded therein. This is the divine testimony of the Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and of the three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood; all give their joint testimony that the Lord Christ is ready to receive all sinners that come to him; they who receive not this testimony make God a liar, Father, Son, and Spirit. Whatever the Lord Christ is in the constitution of his person, in the representation of the Father, in his office, in what he did on earth, in what he doth in heaven, proclaims the same truth. Nothing but wicked obstinacy in sin and unbelief can suggest a thought to our minds that he is not willing to receive us when we come unto him. Herein we are to bear testimony against the unbelief of all unto whom the gospel is preached, that come not unto him. Unbelief, acting itself herein, includes a con-

tempt of the wisdom of God, a denial of his truth or faithfulness, an impeachment of the sincerity of Christ in his invitations, making him a deceiver ; and it will issue in an express hatred of his person and office, and of the wisdom of God in him. Here, then, you are shut up, you cannot from hence take any countenance to your unbelief.

VI. Consider that he is able to save us, as he is ready and willing to receive us. The testimonies which he hath given us of his goodness and love are undeniable, and none dare directly to call in question or deny his power. But Christ is able to save all them, and only them, who come to God by him. Whilst you live in sin and unbelief, Christ himself cannot save you. But when it comes to the trial in particular, some are apt to think, that although they will not conclude that Christ cannot save them, yet they do on various accounts say, that they cannot be saved by him. This, therefore, we also give testimony unto, in our exhortations to come unto him ; namely, that his power to save those that shall comply with his call is sovereign, uncontrollable, and almighty. All things in heaven and earth are committed to him, all power is his, and he will use it to this end ; namely, the assured salvation of all that come unto him.

VII. Consider particularly what hath been spoken of the representation of God, and all the holy properties of his nature in him. Nothing can possibly give us more encouragement to come to him ; for we have shown that God, who is infinitely wise and glorious, hath designed to exercise all the holy properties of his nature, his mercy, love, grace, goodness, righteousness, wisdom, and power in Christ, in and unto the salvation of them that do believe. Whoever, therefore, comes unto Christ by faith on this representation of the glory of God in him, he ascribes and gives to God all that glory and honour which he aimeth at from his creatures ; and we can do nothing wherewith he is pleased equal to it. Every poor sinner that comes by faith unto Christ gives to God all that glory which it is his design to manifest and be exalted in ; and what can we do more ? There is more glory given to God by coming to Christ in believing, than in keeping the whole law ; inasmuch as he hath more eminently manifested the holy properties of his nature in the way of salvation by Christ, than in giving the law : there is, therefore, no man who, under gospel invitations, refuseth to come to Christ by believing, but secretly, through the power of darkness, blindness, and unbelief, he hates God, dislikes all his ways, would not have

his glory exalted, nor manifested, choosing rather to die in enmity against him, than to give glory to him. Do not deceive yourselves; it is not an indifferent thing whether you will come to Christ upon his invitation, or not; a thing that you may put off from one season to another. Your present refusal of it is as high an act of enmity against God as your nature is capable of.

VIII. Consider, that by coming unto Christ, you shall have an interest in all that glory which we have proposed to you; for Christ will become yours more intimately than your wives and children are yours, and so all his glory is yours also. All are apt to be affected with the good things of their relations; their grace, their riches, their beauty, their power; for they judge themselves to have an interest in them, by reason of their relation to them. Christ is nearer to believers than any natural relations are to us; they have, therefore, an interest in all his glory. And is this a small thing in your eyes, that Christ shall be yours, and all his glory shall be yours, and you shall have the advantage of it unto your eternal blessedness? Is it nothing to you to continue strangers to, and uninterested in all his glory? to be left to take your portion in this world of lusts, and sins, and pleasures, and a few perishing trifles, with eternal ruin in the close, whilst such durable substance, such riches of glory are tendered to you?

IX. Consider the horrible ingratitude there is in a neglect or refusal to come to Christ upon his invitation, with the doleful, eternal ruin that will ensue thereon! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Impenitent unbelievers, under the preaching of the gospel, are the vilest and most ungrateful of all God's creation. The devils themselves, wicked as they are, are not guilty of this sin, for Christ is never tendered unto them, they never had any offer of salvation on faith and repentance; this is their peculiar sin, and will be the peculiar aggravation of their misery unto eternity. Hear, ye despisers, wonder and perish. The sin of the devil consists in malice and opposition to knowledge, above what the nature of man is capable of in this world. But men sin, in one instance, above the devil, and therefore God will give them their eternal portion with the devil and his angels; this instance is unbelief.

Some, it may be, will say, "What then shall we do? What is it that is required of us?"

Take the advice of the apostle, "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in

the day of temptation in the wilderness ; but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day ; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. iii. 7, 8, 13. This day, even this, is unto you, in the tender of grace, the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation. Others have had this day as well as you, and have missed their opportunity ; take heed lest it should be so with you also. How if any one should write it down, or peculiarly commit it to remembrance—" This day there was a tender of Christ, and salvation in him, made unto my soul ; from this time I will resolve to give up myself unto him." Having fixed your resolution, charge your consciences with what you have engaged, and make yourselves to know, that if you go back from it, it is a token that you are going to ruin.

Consider that it is high time for you to make somewhat of religion. Do not hang always in suspense ; let it not be a question with yourselves, whether you have a mind to be saved or not. This is as good a time and season for a resolution as ever you are likely to have while in this world. Some things, nay, many things, may fall in between this and the next opportunity, that shall put you backward, and make your entrance into the kingdom of heaven far more difficult than ever it was ; and the living in that uncertainty which you do, of what will become of you in eternity, is the most miserable kind of life in the world. Those who put far from them the evil day, in the pursuit of lusts and pleasures, have somewhat that gives them present satisfaction ; but you have no enjoyment, neither will your latter end be better than theirs, if you die without an interest in Christ Jesus. Come, therefore, at length to a determined resolution what you will do in this matter. Christ hath waited long for you, and who knows how soon he may withdraw, never to look after you any more.

I have thought it necessary to stir up your minds by this exhortation to faith in Jesus Christ, aiming to suit it to the capacity of the meanest sinner that is capable of any self-consideration as to his eternal welfare. But yet a little further, to give efficacy to this exhortation, it will be necessary to remove some of those common and obvious excuses that convinced sinners do usually betake themselves to, to put off a present compliance with the calls of Christ to come unto him ; for although it is unbelief alone, acting in the darkness of men's minds, and the obstinaey of their wills, that effectually keeps off sinners from coming unto Christ upon his call ; yet it shrouds itself under various pretences,

that it may not appear in its own ugly form; for no sin, whereof men can be guilty in this world is of so horrible a nature, and so dreadful an aspect, as this unbelief, where a clear view of it is obtained in evangelical light; wherefore, by the aid of Satan, it suggests other pleas and pretences unto the minds of sinners, unto which they may countenance themselves in a refusal to come to Christ; "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. iv. 4. Anything else it shall be, but not unbelief; that they all disavow. I shall, therefore, notice a few of those excuses which are obvious, and which are exemplified in the gospel itself.

Some say on such exhortations, What is it that you would have us to do? We hear the word preached, we believe it as well as we can, we do many things, and abstain from many evils; what more is required of us? This is the language of the hearts of most with whom in this case we have to do.

It is usual with them who do something in the ways of God, but not all they should, and so nothing in due manner, to expostulate about requiring of them more than they do. So the people dispute with God himself; "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?" Mal. i. 6. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee?" Chap. iii. 8, 13. So they in the gospel, who esteemed themselves to have done their duty, being pressed to faith by Jesus Christ, ask him with some indignation, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" John vi. 28. If what we do be not enough, what is it that you require more of us?—So was it with the young man, "What lack I yet?" Matt. xix. 20. Be advised, therefore, not to be too confident of your state, lest you should yet lack that one thing, the want whereof might prove your eternal ruin.

The things mentioned, with all of the like nature, may be, where there is not one spark of saving faith. Simon Magus heard the word, and we are informed that he believed. Herod heard it, and did many things gladly; and all sorts of hypocrites do, upon their conviction, perform many duties,

and abstain from many sins ; so that, notwithstanding this plea, you may perish for ever.

Where these things are sincere, they belong to the exercise of faith ; they may be after a sort, without faith, but faith cannot be without them. But there is a fundamental act of faith, whereby we close with Christ, whereby we receive him, that is, in order of nature antecedent to its acting in all other duties and occasions : it is laying the foundation ; other things belong to the building. This is that which you are called on to secure, and you know it by these two properties :

First. It is singular. So our Saviour tells the Jews, " This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi. 29. The act, work, or duty of faith in receiving Christ, is a peculiar, singular work, wherein the soul yields especial obedience unto God ; it is not to be reckoned with such common duties as those mentioned ; but the soul must find out wherein it hath closed with Christ, upon the command of God.

Second. It is accompanied with an universal spiritual change in the whole soul, " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. Wherefore, if you would not choose rather to deceive and ruin your own souls, come to the trial, whether indeed you have received Christ in such a singular transforming act of faith ; do not, on such pretences, refuse to comply with the word of exhortation proposed unto you.

But some may say, they know not how to proceed in this work. They can make nothing of it ; they have tried to come to this believing, but do still fail in what they design ; they go on and off, but can make no progress, can come to no satisfaction ; therefore, they think it best to let things go on generally as they are, without putting themselves to further trouble, as unto any special act of faith in the receiving of Christ. This is the language of men's hearts, though not of their mouths, another shelter of unbelief, and they act accordingly ; they have a secret dependence, which keeps them from attempting a real closing with Christ on the tender of the gospel. Something may be offered to this distempered mind.

Remember the disciples that were fishing, who had toiled all night, but caught nothing. Upon the coming of Christ unto them, he requires that they should cast out their net once more. Peter makes some excuse, from the labour which they had taken in vain all the night ; however he

would venture once more on the command of Christ, and had an astonishing draught of fishes, Luke v. 3—9. Have you been wearied in the disappointments attending your attempts and resolutions? Yet cast in your net this once more upon the command of Christ; venture this once more to come unto him on his call and invitation; you know not what success he may give you.

Consider it is not failing in this or that attempt of coming to Christ, but a giving over your endeavours, that will be your ruin. The woman of Canaan, in her great outcry to Christ for mercy, Matt. xv. 22, had many a repulse. First, it is said, he answered her not a word; then his disciples desired that he would send her away that she might not trouble him any more; whereon he gives a reason why he should not regard her, or why he could justly pass her by; she was not an Israelite, unto whom he was sent; yet she gives not over, but pressing into his presence, cries out for mercy, verse 25. Being come to that issue, to try and draw out her faith to the utmost, which was his design from the beginning, he reckons her among dogs, that were not to have children's bread given unto them. Had she now at last given over, upon this severe rebuke, she had never obtained mercy; but persisting in her request, she at last prevailed, verse 27, 28. It may be you have prayed, and cried, and resolved, and vowed, but all without success, as you suppose; sin hath broken through all; however, if you give not over, you shall prevail at last; you know not at what time God will come in with his grace, and Christ will manifest his love to you, as unto the poor woman, after many a rebuke. It may be, after all, he will do it this day, and if not, he may do it another; do not despond, take that word of Christ himself for your encouragement, "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors," Prov. viii. 34. If you hear him and wait, though you have not yet admission, but are kept at the doors, yet, in the issue, you shall be blessed.

The rule, in this case, is, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know," Hosea vi. 3. Are you in the way of knowing Christ, in the use of means, and hearing his word? Though you cannot yet attain unto any evidence that you have received him, and closed with him, nothing can ruin you but giving over the way wherein you are; for then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord. Many can give you their experience, that if they had been discouraged by present overwhelming difficulties, arising from

their disappointments, and relapses into folly, they had been utterly ruined, whereas now they are at rest and peace in the bosom of Christ. On a great surprisal, Christ lost at once many disciples, and they lost their souls; "They went back, and walked no more with him," John vi. 66. Take heed of the like discouragements.

Some may say, yea, practically they do say, that these things indeed are necessary; they must come to Christ by believing, or they are undone; but this is not the season for it, there will be time enough to apply themselves to it, when other occasions are past; at present they have no leisure to enter upon and go through with this duty, wherefore they will abide in their present state for a while, hearing and doing many things, and, when time serves, will apply themselves to this duty also.

This is an uncontrollable evidence of the sottishness and folly which are come upon our nature by sin; a depravation that the apostle places in the evils of corrupted nature, "For we ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," &c. Tit. iii. 3. Can any thing be more foolish, sottish, and stupid, than for men to put off the consideration of the eternal concerns of their souls for one hour, being altogether uncertain whether they shall live another or not? to prefer present trifles before the blessedness or misery of an immortal state? For those who never heard of these things, who never had any conviction of sin and judgment, to put the evil day far from them, is not so much to be wondered at; but for you who have Christ preached unto you, who own a necessity of coming unto him, to put it off from day to day, upon such slight pretences, it is astonishing folly! May you not be spoken unto in the language of the wisdom of God, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" Prov. vi. 9. You come to hear the word, and when you go away, the language of your heart is, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep;" we will abide a little while in our present state, and afterwards we will rouse up ourselves. Under this deceit do multitudes perish every day. This is a dark shade wherein cursed unbelief lies hid.

Consider that delay is the greatest engine which Satan makes use of in the world, among those who hear the word preached unto them, for the ruin of their souls. He hath other arts, and ways, and methods of dealing with other men, as by sensual and worldly lusts; but as unto them who, through their convictions, do attend unto the preaching

of the word, this is his great and almost only engine for their ruin : “ There needs no haste in this matter, another time will be more seasonable, you may be sure not to fail of it before you die ; however, this present day is most unfit for it ; you have other things to do, you may come again to hear the word the next opportunity.” Know assuredly, if your minds are influenced to delay coming to Christ by such insinuations, you are under the power of Satan, and he is likely enough to hold you fast unto destruction.

This is as evil and dangerous a posture, or frame of mind, as you can well fall under. If you have learned to put off God, and Christ, and the word, for the present season, and yet relieve yourselves in this, that you do not intend, like others, always to reject them, but will have a time to hearken to their call ; you are secured and fortified against all convictions, and persuasions, and fears ; one answer will serve for all—Within a little while you will do all that can be required of you. It is better dealing with men openly profligate, than with such a trifling promiser ; see Isa. v. 1—6.

Remember, then, that the Scripture confines you to the present day, without the least intimation that you shall have either another day, or another tender of grace and mercy in any day,—“ Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation,” 2 Cor. vi. 2.—“ Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, “ To-day if ye will hear his voice. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” Heb. iii. 7, 13.—“ Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled,” Heb. xii. 15. Take care lest you come short of the grace of God. Redeem the time, or you are lost for ever.

As to the pretence of your occasions and business, there is a ready way to disappoint the craft of Satan in that pretence, which is, to mix thoughts of Christ, and the renovation of your resolutions, either to come or to cleave unto him, with all your occasions ; let nothing put it utterly out of your minds ; make it familiar unto you, and you will beat Satan out of that strong hold. “ Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister ; and call understanding thy kinswoman,” Prov. vii. 4. However, shake yourselves out of this dust, destruction lies at the door.

It is the language of the heart of some, that if they give up themselves into a compliance with this exhortation, and go seriously about this duty, they must relinquish and renounce all their lusts and pleasures, yea, much of their con-

verse and society wherein they find so much present satisfaction, as that they know not how to part with them. If they might retain their old ways, at least some of them, it were another matter, but this total relinquishment of all is very severe.

We can here use no condescension, no compliance, no composition with respect unto any sin or lust; we have no commission to grant that request of Lot, "Is it not a little one?" let it be spared: nor to come to Naaman's terms, "God be merciful to me in this thing, in all others I will be obedient." We must here be peremptory with you, whatever be the event; if you are discouraged by it, we cannot help it. We cannot encourage you to come to Christ with the hope of indulgence in any one sin whatever. I speak not this as though you could at once absolutely and perfectly leave all sin in the root and branches of it; but only you are to do it in heart and resolution, engaging in an universal mortification of all sin, as by grace from above you shall be enabled; but your choice must be absolute, without reserves, as to love, interest, and design; God or the world, Christ or Belial, holiness or sin; there is no medium, no terms of composition. "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 15—18.

As to what you pretend of your pleasures, the truth is, you never yet had any real pleasure, nor do you know what it is. How easy were it to show the folly, vanity, bitterness, and poison of those things which you have esteemed your pleasure: here alone, namely, in Christ, and a participation of him, are true pleasures and durable riches to be obtained: pleasures of a heavenly nature, and such as like pleasant streams flow down into the ocean of eternal pleasures. A few moments in these joys are to be preferred above the longest continuance in the pleasures of this world.

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto

her. Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her : and happy is every one that retaineth her," Prov. iii. 13—18.

It will be said by some, that they do not see that those who profess to be believers are so much better than they, as that you need to press them so earnestly to so great a change ; they know not why they should not be accounted believers already as well as others. I shall in a few words, as well as I am able, lay this stumbling-block out of the way, though I confess at this day it is a serious one. And I say,

1. Among those who profess themselves to be believers, there are many false, corrupt hypocrites : and it is no wonder that, on various occasions, they lay the stumbling-block of their iniquities before the face of others ; but they shall bear their own burden.

2. It is acknowledged and lamented that some who have reason to be judged true believers, yet, through their unmortified pride, or covetousness, or carelessness, in their conversation, or vain attire, and conformity to the world, or frowardness, do give just occasion of offence. We confess that God is displeased herewith ; Christ and the gospel dishonoured ; and many that are weak and wounded are discouraged. But as for you, this is not your rule ; this is not proposed to you, but that word only is so that will never fail you.

3. The world doth not know, nor is able to make a right judgment of believers ; nor do you, for it is the spiritual man alone that discerneth the things of God. Their infirmities are visible to all, their graces invisible ; the king's daughter is glorious within. And when you are able to make a right judgment of them, you will desire no greater advancement than to be of their society, Ps. xvi. 3.

These few instances of the pretences wherewith unbelief covers its deformity, and hides that destruction wherewith it is accompanied, may suffice to our present purpose ; they are multiplied in the minds of men, impregnated by the suggestions of Satan on their darkness and folly. A little spiritual wisdom will rend the veil of them all, and expose unbelief acting in enmity against Christ under them.

THE END.

GRACE

TO THE

CHIEF OF SINNERS.

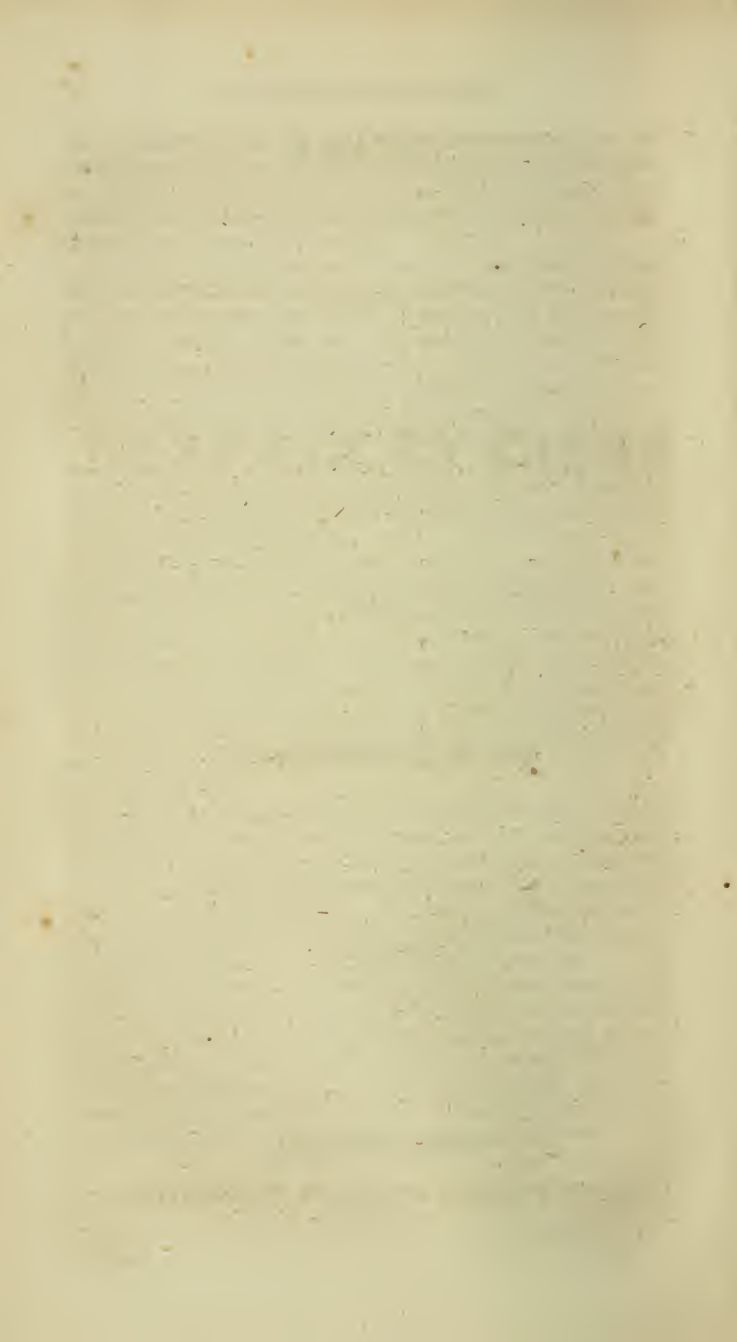
BY THE

REV. B. GROSVENOR, D.D.



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GRACE TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS.

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke xxiv. 47.

OUR Lord Jesus being risen from the dead, the method he uses to demonstrate to his disciples the certainty of so great a miracle, is very complete. He begins with their senses, showing himself to them, and offering to be touched and handled, v. 39, "For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have." He next addresses their faith, by arguments from Scripture, proving that those things must needs "be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning him," v. 44. And lastly, completes the conviction, and assists them to make the best use of it, by opening their understanding, v. 45. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, that thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM."

From which words we may observe,

I. That repentance and remission of sins are both the fruits of Christ's death and resurrection; since it behoved Christ thus to suffer and rise, that they might be preached. Had he not died and risen again, there would have been no forgiveness. There might indeed have been a kind of repentance, such as in hell, or such as that of Judas, which sent him thither; a repentance unto death and despair: but repentance unto life, and remission of sins, are the blessed fruits that grow out of the accursed tree, and do rise with our Lord Jesus out of the same grave. "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again," that is the ground of that striking challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"

II. Repentance and remission of sins go together, both in the commission, and in the nature of the thing.

To preach repentance is as truly the design and business of the Gospel-commission, as to preach remission of

sins. Consequently, if I preach the nature of repentance, the motives to it, the necessity of it, it is all Gospel; it is what the law of innocence knew nothing of, and made no allowance for; but this makes one half of the Gospel-commission.

Repentance, is a revolted sinner's returning back from sin and Satan, from the world and self, to God, his original happiness; as to his sovereign Lord, to be obeyed, and his best portion, to be enjoyed; depending for acceptance on the intercession of the Mediator. For this end Christ came into the world, with this he began his ministry, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." With this message were the apostles and ministers sent unto all nations; and it would be very strange indeed, if Christ, his apostles, his first ministers, and his own commission too, should be all of them only in a legal design, and governed by a legal spirit.

III. The Gospel-commission and offer is without exception of nation or persons; "that repentance and remission of sins may be preached unto all nations."

Impenitence and unbelief make the only exceptions. They do indeed effectually keep our names out of the book of life, the list and characters of those whom the Gospel appoints to salvation. It is no imputation upon God that "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," is not as universal as the light of the sun; and that the book of Scripture is not read, wherever the book of nature lies open. Their line is gone throughout all the world; and wherever one line of nature's law is written, it might have been interlined with Gospel-discoveries, if it had not been their own fault; for the commission was as wide as possible, but they would not suffer it to run. And though it was commissioned unto all nations, those very nations absolutely refused it, and cannot justly tax Providence for the want of that which they would never receive.

IV. These great blessings of repentance and remission of sins are commanded to be offered in the first place, to some of the vilest of sinners, *beginning at Jerusalem.*

It is very affecting, that the first offers of grace should be made to those, who of all people in the world had done it the most despite! That the heavenly gift should be

tendered to those first, who least deserved it! Not that any can deserve it at all, for then it were not grace; but they of all people had most deserved the contrary! That they who had abused Christ to a degree beyond the most pitiful description, should yet lie uppermost in his care, and stand foremost in his pity, and find so much mercy from one, to whom they showed none at all!

One would rather have expected the apostles should have received another kind of charge; and that Christ should have said, "Let repentance and remission of sins be preached, but carry it not to Jerusalem, that wicked city, that has been the slaughter-house of my prophets, whom I have often sent. After them I sent John the baptist, a burning and a shining light, him they killed in prison. Last of all, I myself, the Son, came also; and me, with wicked hands, they have crucified and slain. They may do the same by you; the disciple is not likely to be better treated than his Lord: let not the Gospel enter those gates, through which they led me, its author, to crucifixion.

"I have been preaching there myself these three years; I have mingled my tears with my sermons; I have supported my pretensions and character from the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets; I have confirmed them by divine miracles, and sealed all with my blood; yet they would not give ear! O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! all that I have left for thee now is, what I have before dropped over thee, namely, a compassionate tear and wish, 'That thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belonged to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes!' and so let them remain, for I charge you, my apostles, to preach repentance and remission of sins to all other nations, but come not near that wicked city."

But God's thoughts are not as ours, neither are his ways as our ways; but as far as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts and ways above ours. Our way is, to make the chief offenders examples of justice; to avenge ourselves upon those who have done us personal injury and wrong; but Christ chooses out these, to make examples of mercy, and commands the first offer of eternal life to be made to them, and all the world are to wait till they have had the first refusal of the Gospel salvation.

As if our Lord had said, "It is true, my sufferings are

a universal remedy, and I have given my life a ransom for many, that the Gentiles afar off might be brought nigh, and all the ends of the earth might see the salvation of God. And therefore go unto all nations, and offer this salvation as you go; but, lest the poor house of Israel should think themselves abandoned to despair, the seed of Abraham, mine ancient friend, as cruel and unkind as they have been, go, make them the first offer of grace, let them have the first refusal of Gospel-mercy; let them that struck the rock, drink first of its refreshing streams; and they that drew my blood be welcome to its healing virtue.

“Tell them, that as I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so, if they will be gathered, I will be their shepherd still. Though they despise my tears, which I shed over them, and imprecated my blood to be upon them, tell them it was for their sakes I shed both; that by my tears I might soften their hearts towards God; and by my blood I might reconcile God to them.

“Tell them I live; and because I am alive again, my death shall not be their damnation; nor is my murder an unpardonable sin, but that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, even the sin by which that blood was spilt.

“Tell them, you have seen the prints of the nails upon my hands and feet, and the wounds of the spear in my side; and that those marks of their cruelty are so far from giving me vindictive thoughts, if they will but repent, that every wound they have given me speaks in their behalf, pleads with the Father for remission of their sins, and enables me to bestow it; and by those sufferings which, they may be ready to think, have exasperated me against them, by those very wounds, court and persuade them to receive the salvation they have procured. Say, ‘Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.’” Acts iii. 19.

“Nay, if you meet that poor wretch that thrust the spear into my side, tell him there is another way, a better way, of coming at my heart, if he will repent, and look upon him whom he has pierced and will mourn. I will cherish him in that very bosom he has wounded; he shall find the blood he shed an ample atonement for the sin of shedding it. And tell him from me, he

will put me to more pain and displeasure by refusing this offer of my blood, than when he drew it forth. In short,

“Though they have gainsayed my doctrine, blasphemed my divinity, and abused and tormented my person; taken away my life, and what is next valuable to every honest man, endeavoured to murder my reputation too, by making me an impostor and imputing my miracles to a combination with Beelzebub: however, go to Jerusalem, and by beginning there, show them such a miracle of goodness and grace, that they themselves must confess too good for the devil to have any hand in, too God-like for him to be assisting to; that may convince them of their sin, and at the same time, that nothing can be greater than their sin, except this mercy and grace of mine, which, where their sin has abounded, does thus much more abound—*beginning at Jerusalem.*”

I shall further improve this passage by speaking to the following things.

I. For what reasons, special to that place and people, must the Gospel first begin at Jerusalem?

II. For what reasons, common to the case of all great sinners, is the Lord Jesus so desirous of their conversion, and that they should know that he is so?

FIRST. For what reasons, special to that place and people, must the Gospel first begin at Jerusalem?

1. Christ was first promised to them, and therefore must be first offered to them. He was the mercy promised to the fathers. The time of his coming is called the time of the fulfilling of the promise, in the hope of which they waited instantly day and night: to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenant of promise, the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.

The promise of the Messiah was the peculiar entail of that family, of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came. Indeed, in him also do the Gentiles trust; but we come in as legatees to the new will and testament in his blood, whereby he has brought Jews and Gentiles upon the same terms for salvation:—he that believeth shall be saved, to the Jew first, and then also to the Gentile.

2. The wisdom of God thought fit to lay the foundation of the Gospel at that place where its foundation was first struck at.

The report of his being stolen away by his disciples

was a blow at the root ; for if Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, and our preaching is vain ; therefore do you go first to Jerusalem, and confute that lie. Though it is a lie that has the countenance of some in figure and authority, yet you must confront it ; “ Ye are my witnesses of these things,” v. 48, and by your testimony I must dissipate that artifice of the devil.

For otherwise, Christianity must have offered itself to the world around with great disadvantage, if it had not first shown itself at Jerusalem, and asserted the resurrection of Jesus to the teeth of those who were hired to spread that ill-contrived lie* of his being stolen away. The nations might suspect that the doctrine of Jesus durst not show itself at Jerusalem, for want of sufficient evidence of the resurrection of its author. But your testimony will either satisfy or leave them without excuse. You are a sufficient number, you are of approved honesty, your interest lies another way, that should lead you rather to fall in with the spirit of the times, and to find your account in running down the suffering cause ; you cannot bear your testimony without hazard, damage, and ruin ; and it was never known that any men forged lies to their own undoing, knowing, as you do, that it will be so. Besides, your testimony shall be confirmed by signs, wonders, and miracles ; not only performed by yourselves, but those also who shall, by your testimony, believe in me. All which renders your testimony sufficient to lay the foundation of the Gospel sure, even at that very place where its foundation was chiefly attacked.

3. Upon hearing the Gospel preached elsewhere round about them, they might be apt to think, that, for the greatness of their crimes, they were passed by, neglected, and abandoned.

4. Their day of grace was likely to be the shortest.

Begin at Jerusalem, for yet a little while and there will be no Jerusalem standing : their glass has but a little time to run. Yet forty years and Jerusalem shall be destroyed. Their nation, polity, and temple shall be no more. You will have time then to go over the nations, but to those who have so little time remaining, none should be lost ; begin therefore at Jerusalem.

5. It was foretold by the prophets, that the Gospel should

* So St. Augustin says. For, says he, if the soldiers were asleep, how did they know his disciples stole him ? if awake, why did they let them do it ?

begin there, and from thence take its rise and progress into all the world; that out of Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; that in Zion he would lay a foundation stone. Say unto Zion, Thy King cometh, is the tenor of several Scripture prophecies of Gospel times, besides those that follow, Isa. ii. 3, 4. Mic. iv. 2. Ps. cx. 2. Isa. xxviii. 16. Isa. xl. &c. So that, to begin at Jerusalem was one prophetic mark of the divinity of this dispensation; the church did hereby know where to look for their Messiah. That the world might not be at a loss in this, he ordered his prophets long before to point out time and place.

Besides, it was fit the Son of David, who was to have the throne of his father David, should begin his kingdom at the city of David. And farther, it is observable, how far some prophecies, which we commonly understand of the calling of the Jews, were to receive their accomplishment at this time, by the apostles' successful execution of this commission among them, whereby so many thousands of them were converted.

6. For a standing example of the riches and freeness of the grace of Christ in the offer of it to the vilest of sinners.

Begin at Jerusalem, and after the saving efficacy of my grace appears there, no one will question the possibility of their own salvation. Shall not a poor penitent sinner be accepted, when the vilest of sinners are courted? Poor sinners of the Gentiles must not question his grace, when they see it offered to his murderers. When they see him willing to have mercy upon those who had no mercy upon him, and desirous of no other reparation for the injuries they did him, but only, that they would not refuse the grace he now offered to them, and that too before all the rest of the world.

SECONDLY. For what reasons, common to the case of all great sinners, is our Lord so desirous of their conversion, and that they should know that he is so?

That he is willing they should be converted and saved is very plain: he has not left this to be made out by inference and deduction, but has asserted it in so many words. "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved."

His behaviour towards some of the vilest of sinners,

demonstrates to what low degrees of condescension he can stoop, with how much tenderness he will use those upon their return, whom by such indulgent measures he endeavours to reclaim.

I am affected when I read, that God staid till the cool of the day, an emblem of abated anger, before he comes to deal with fallen Adam; and then follows the sinner with a promise, who was vainly endeavouring to hide himself from a curse, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head:" what a seasonable relief and stay to a trembling rebel!

Manasseh was proverbial for wickedness, gave himself to work iniquity, and thereby to the devil; yet God did not suffer Satan to run away with the purchase, but by a sore affliction brought him to his knees, humbled and reformed him: and if he was not truly converted and saved, still the method God used with him was the ready way to it.

When Christ came into the world bringing salvation, to whom did he offer it? Was it not to publicans and harlots? Publicans, accounted the worst of men; and harlots, the worst of women? Giving this reason, that "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It was with this good design he kept such bad company. And as a specimen of his saving power, he carried about with him several of those notorious converts, as it were with this proclamation—"Behold the mighty things my grace can do, what sinners I can reclaim, what sins I can pardon, and how many devils I can cast out? Look upon these and believe, that I am able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by me; look upon these and believe, that no kind, number, or degrees of sins, can keep a man out of heaven, that do not keep him from coming to Christ."

The woman of Samaria was a licentious person by her own confession, and by Christ's discovery, yet with how soft and winning an address does he assure her, "If thou hadst known the gift of God, and who it was that said unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." To covetous Zaccheus, he says, "This day is salvation come to thine house." Salvation to be had for fetching was great grace, but he brings it home to his house.

How he dignifies his sufferings, how he turns the ignominy of his cross into glory, by proving the saving merits

of his death in the conversion and salvation of the dying thief! There the poor wretch hung, bleeding his last: with what eyes, with what heart and thoughts, must the expiring criminal survey a Jesus hanging by him upon a cross, covered with blood and scorn! so as to collect the remainder of his breath into such a prayer, "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." What! ask a dying person for life! pray to a crucified Jesus for a kingdom! to one, that appeared outcast by Jews, and deserted even by his own disciples; to such a one, for admission to the kingdom of glory! How extraordinary the request! How gracious the inward operations that produced it! And how speedy and full the answer! "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." "I will carry thee up with me into heaven, as the fruit of the present travail of my soul, as a trophy of my victory over Satan, and will show thee there, as part of the spoils that shall adorn my triumphs over hell and its powers; and as the earnest of the full recovery and salvation of all those for whom I am now dying." He snatches, from the very brink of hell, one that seemed not only void of grace, but past grace; and melts the heart in an instant, that had been hardening for many years.

St. Paul speaks of himself as if he were a monument set up by Christ to bear such an inscription as this, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

The crucifixion of our Lord was the most affecting and tragical cruelty ever acted, or recorded. Wherever the guilt of it could fall, one would think it should be with weight enough to sink them below the reach of mercy. The apostle charges it home upon Jerusalem; "Him—ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Never can any minister again preach to so wicked an auditory, till a new kind of wickedness arise, greater than the murder of the Lord of life. Yet to wash those wicked hands from the guilt of all that they had done, he tenders the laver of the blood of Christ, inviting them thus—"Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, every one of you, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Every one of

you, not excepting any that were concerned in it; not excepting any of those priests that persuaded the multitude to ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus; nor him that spit in his face, or struck him on the head; nor him who thrust the spear into his side, if any of these should be in the crowd. And he was so happy as to prevail with about three thousand of them at one sermon. And a little while after we are particularly informed, that some even of the priests also were obedient to the faith. A thing so much the more worthy of remark, to the honour of the word and grace of God, as the knowledge of that class of men did both aggravate the crime of their disobedience, and enable them beyond others to parry off the conviction of it.

Though Simon Magus had been a sorcerer, yet upon profession of his faith and subjection to Christ, the apostles were so far from supposing that he could not become a Christian, or that the mercy of God did not extend even to such a character, upon repentance, that they baptized him: and when afterwards it appeared, that he was yet in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity, and had only acted an hypocritical part; nevertheless, to show that if he were yet lost, it could not be from any defect of the saving grace of God, but from his continuing to be a hypocrite, they send him to the grace of God by prayer, that the thoughts of his heart, vile as they had been, might be forgiven him.

The reasons of this merciful conduct towards the vilest and greatest of sinners may be such as these.

1. The desperateness of the case of great sinners makes it needful, that they should have good assurance of pardon.

Their danger is more near and imminent. They are upon the very brink of destruction. Their damnation lingereth not, but hastens to meet them, and they at the same time are advancing apace towards that; as Goliath, with large steps, made haste to meet the fatal sling and stone, with which David also ran toward him at the same time. Their sins are a vast number; the cry of them is loud for vengeance, the weight and aggravations of them are heavy: Satan, the executioner, has them bound in the chains of lust, under the sentence of a condemning law; the justice of God is whetting its glittering sword to cut them off; and there is but a single breath between them and damnation, which may very easily and suddenly be

stopped : so that the mercy is greatly heightened in being offered to such as these in the first place, and with a particular solicitude to win them over : this wine must be given to them that are so ready to perish.

Besides this, it is with great difficulty that great sinners, upon conviction, are even now brought to believe there is mercy for them : it would have been harder still, had there been no instances of extraordinary grace to sinners of an extraordinary character.

Had the Gospel taken a large round before it had come to Jerusalem, the proffers of mercy would not have been so easily believed, as when they came so fresh from his own lips, whose anger they had much more reason to fear, than to hope for his mercy ; but the unparalleled grace of sending it to them first, was superior to all objection. This sets it as much above all doubt and scruple, as it was beyond all example or expectation. Indeed, before sinners are awakened to a sense of their sins, and of God's justice, they are very confident of his mercy : the mercy of God is infinite, say they, goodness is his nature, he never made any creatures to do them any hurt, and it is an easy thing enough to entertain the hopes of salvation through the merits of Christ, and the mercy of God. But how suddenly is the style altered, upon a deep conviction of conscience, and the opening the eyes to the number, nature, and aggravation of their sins, together with the law, the holiness and justice of God arming against them! Then "Is there mercy for such a wretch as I? Is it possible for me to be saved? Can so black a soul as mine be washed into purity, and so much guilt as I have contracted be removed?" They, who before thought sin but a trifle, are now ready to think it entirely unpardonable ; they, who a little before were ready to say, there is no fear, are now ready to conclude, there is no hope : they now as much need the encouragement of such an instance as this, as before they were ready enough to abuse it.

2. The conversion of a great sinner renders the grace of God the more glorious.

Begin at Jerusalem, and the wonders of my grace there will raise my name Jesus to its just esteem in the world. The Saviour, the God, will appear in all their height and lustre, and my power to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by me. Let the world see what distempers the skill of this physician can heal, and what sins the

grace of God can pardon: it is like the honour a physician gains by healing a disease given over by all others. Jerusalem seemed abandoned to sin, misery, and the devil, when Christ said, "Now the things of thy peace are hid from thine eyes, thine house is left unto thee desolate." A desperate case! He must be mighty to save indeed that undertakes such a case as this. And yet, that future ages might believe there could be no such thing as a foil to the skill and power of our Physician; to show his art in saving souls, he sends the remedy first thither, where one would have thought them past it, and makes it effectual to all that put themselves into his hands: For "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: for by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." Eph. ii. 4—7. This, he declares, is to get himself a name; for he says, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me: and it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour, before all the nations of the earth which shall hear all the good that I do unto them." Jer. xxxiii. 8, 9. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out your iniquity for my name's sake." "So when they had heard that he which persecuted us in times past, now preached the faith which once he destroyed, they glorified God in me." Gal. i. 23, 24. It renders the grace of God the more glorious.

3. The conversion of great sinners does more than ordinarily weaken the interest and kingdom of Satan.

They are leading men in the party of hell. They do a great deal of mischief before, and generally do a great deal of good after their conversion. Their example very often draws in others. If one sinner spoils a great deal of good, the conversion of such an one prevents a great deal of mischief. Paul, who, while an enemy persecuted the church beyond measure, when an apostle, laboured more abundantly than they all. While an enemy, he says of himself, that he was exceeding mad against the Christians, and when a preacher, he was thought to be so for them, in the greatness of his zeal. The devil lost all the

cruel activity of such an agent, when he was taken off by grace ; and the interest of Christ had the advantage of a diligence in its favour, proportionable to what he had used before in doing mischief.

They are sensible how much grace went to their recovery, how much was forgiven them, how much they are thereby obliged ; for to whom much is forgiven, they love much, as our Lord said of a distinguished convert. She anointed him with oil, bowed down to his feet, that she might bathe them with her tears ; she poured out her heart at her eyes while she wept over them, she kissed them and anointed them, and wiped them with the hair of her head ; and there she could as willingly have poured out her life and blood. He could hardly get water for his feet of Simon : but he was a Pharisee, and thought himself no very great sinner : while the poor woman's love was extremely tender, officious, and overflowing : " Seest thou this woman ? (says Christ) thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head." The reason of this different carriage he explains in the after parable, of which this is the sum, that to whom much is forgiven, they love much. Luke vii. Hence those fervent prayers, that activity and diligence, those warm affections, that ready self-denial, that exemplary piety, all which shine forth in some remarkable converts, who think they can never do enough for him, who has done and suffered, who has given and forgiven so much to them.

4. In such converts the graces of sanctification do show themselves, and appear with singular advantage and lustre.

Begin at Jerusalem, and if any of the obstinate sinners there shall be softened, melted, and converted to me, it will appear to be the grace of God indeed. Begin, not at Athens, among philosophers ; but at Jerusalem, among the worst of sinners : whose reformation, virtue, and goodness can be imputed to nothing else but the grace of God. When a person of good education and some morals, one that passes for a good sort of man among his neighbours, is converted, the change is not so visible, the transition is not so discernible, neither to himself nor to others. For this reason it is, that the time and circumstances of conversion are seldom remembered by such, as the brightest line does not show itself upon a light wall. But when the grace of God lays hold of an immoral man, a person noto-

riously wicked, every one sees the new creature; the alteration is plain; all behold it, and say, He is a new man, he is become quite another thing; the Ethiopian's skin is changed, and the leopard's spots are removed, and the wolf is turned into a lamb. When they can say of one that neglected all duty, Behold he prays! of a persecutor, that he preacheth the faith that he once destroyed: when they see a Magdalene, whose former character and life was as wretched as if she had been possessed with seven devils, at the feet of Jesus: a covetous Zaccheus, who never thought that he had enough, not only refunding his unjust extortions, but giving half his goods to the poor: when they see the drunkard no more filled with wine, wherein is excess, but filled with the Spirit; the voluptuous become self-denying; the passionate and revengeful, meek and patient; the proud, humble and lowly; this shows the grace of God to the greatest advantage and set-off; when the divine pencil lays such bright colours and lovely features upon so black a ground.

5. The conversion of such notorious sinners will leave all those who continue obstinate and impenitent without excuse.

Who can say, after this, that the mercy of God was not great enough to forgive his sin, or the grace of God not strong enough to overcome his corruptions, when this mercy and grace are offered to the vilest of sinners, even in the first place? "If I had not come, and spoken to them, they had no sin (in comparison), but now they have no cloak for their sin." Did I not tell thee, that I was able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by me? and to give proof of it I ordered my Gospel to begin at Jerusalem.

The sinner shall stand at the bar of God, with guilt in his looks, trembling in his joints, convulsions in his conscience. Fearful apprehensions! Can he deny his guilt? No: the eye of the Judge, like a flame of fire, shoots into the heart and conscience, light and pain, conviction and anguish, at the same time: such light and conviction, that make the old records there legible again which time seemed to have obliterated. Can he form excuses? What can despair and unbelief say, for having kept a sinner from Christ and heaven? Ah, Lord! I thought myself too great a sinner to be pardoned. That is (Christ may reply) you thought I was a liar, when I told you, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" when I told

you, that "The blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin." Look then upon Adam, that destroyed a world, Manasseh, Rahab, Magdalene, Zaccheus, Paul, and especially on those Jerusalem sinners, who laid hold of eternal life with hands stained with my own blood! "But I thought it would have been time enough on a death-bed." "But by my ordering them to begin at Jerusalem, I let all the world know, that no time was ever to be lost." "I thought I could have pleaded what I have often put off others with, that if I was decreed to be saved, I should be saved, and if not"—"But who empowered thee to make such rules of acting to thyself? Upon this reasoning there was no need of beginning any where: why must secret things, that belong to God, be your rule, in neglect of the plain, revealed things, that belong to you and your children; when I never made them a rule for your conduct, nor would you ever do it in any other case of value? You never would venture your life, health, or limbs, upon such a notion of my decrees, which shows the hypocrisy of such a pretence: you never said with yourself, If I am decreed to escape, I shall escape, and so refused to avoid a wild beast, or the mouth of a cannon. If I am decreed to be preserved, I shall be preserved, and so let the fire burn, that had kindled upon your house; and why the end, salvation, should be expected merely from a decree, without the means, repentance, and faith, and holiness, when you always joined them together in other cases, is only because in this case you did not like the means. And by the very decrees you plead, I have ordained, that such shall never obtain this end, who dislike the means; who neglect that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "But, O Lord, I had heard a great deal of thy mercy, even to thy murderers, and I thought that I might have depended upon it." To which Christ may finally answer, "Such mercy as you depended upon was never heard of in my Gospel, was a pure invention of your own and the devil's; and as for Jerusalem, repentance always went along with that commission, that carried them the forgiveness of sins."

To what has been said, for the practical improvement of this behaviour of our Lord, we may add the following remarks.

1. The grace of God always prevents us, and begins with us.

Begin at Jerusalem, or Jerusalem would have been long

enough before they would have sought after him : he prevents us with the blessings of his goodness. The good Shepherd goes after the lost sheep ; for he came to seek, in order to save, that which was lost. While the prodigal was a great way off, the father runs to meet him ; so little reason is there to fear he will run from us, when we come to him.

2. This is strong consolation against any temptations to despair, that arise from the thought of your being the greatest of sinners.

What could our Lord do more to encourage you to hope ? And what can you do so unsuitable to all this, as to throw it up, in distrust of him ? Is it possible for all the powers of darkness, to form a cloud so gloomy, as this will not dart some light and comfort through ? Open thy soul to this assurance ; it is a beam from the face of thy Redeemer, " To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death." Look upon Jerusalem city, and tell the devil he lies, the next time he says there is no hope.

3. These things conclude as strongly against presumption, the other extreme.

Look over all the instances here mentioned, and see if any of them were saved without faith and repentance.— Will you say, Paul, Mary Magdalene, and the Jerusalem sinners, were saved by Christ, upon their faith and repentance, and new obedience ; therefore I shall be saved by this mercy, without these ? They were saved from their sins, therefore I shall be saved in them ? This is a presumption upon a sort of grace, that the Bible no where promises, and that never saved any one soul yet, nor ever will. Besides, were not those who remained impenitent, afterwards destroyed for all this ? Properly, none ought to despair of the mercy of Christ, but those who thus presume upon it, by expecting the benefit of it in a way in which it shall never be bestowed. The established order of salvation is repentance and remission of sins : we are saved by grace, through the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost : out of this method, all the merit of Christ and the mercy of God will not save me. It was mercy and grace brought forth this method, wisdom and justice approved it ; can the same mercy and grace annul it ? Can truth and holiness ever leave it ? In this method the worst of sins shall not be my ruin ; but out of it, all the grace in heaven cannot prevent it ; be-

cause, properly speaking, there is no such grace in heaven, nor any where else, but in the vain imagination of those, who love their sins, too well to part with them, even for eternal life.

The offer of salvation is, indeed, amazing grace : but mercy merely offered saves no man, without acceptance of the grace, and compliance with the method of salvation. It is to as many as receive him, that power is given to become the sons of God. What is included in this acceptance of mercy ; how the grace of God works it in us, what we can do, or cannot do in it, belongs not to me at present to inquire. But the absolute necessity of the thing itself, is what appears from this text, against all presumption whatsoever ; because, there is nothing in heaven or earth provided in the room of faith and holiness, nor can any one stand forth and say, that the grace of the gospel has made provision of any thing, either in God, Christ, or the Spirit of God, to stand in the room of faith and holiness ; for without faith I have no part in God nor Christ. And further, because these sinners of Jerusalem, who did not repent and believe, according to this commission, were afterwards, notwithstanding the grace of the offer, finally destroyed. In a word, the immense goodness of this offer forbids all despair, and yet at the same time doubles the damnation of such as dare sinfully presume upon it on the one hand, or refuse it on the other.

4. This is a warrant, and obligation upon ministers, to offer salvation to the worst of sinners.

They were to go into the city, and preach repentance and remission of sins to whomsoever they met. If they had met the false witnesses, that testified against Christ if they had met those that cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him," they must have preached this same crucified Jesus to them all.

The original commissions are the model of all our preaching, and by comparing them together, they exhibit the two great ends of preaching ; one is the conversion of sinners, Let repentance and remission of sins be preached unto all nations ; the other, the edification of saints, "teaching them to do whatsoever I have commanded : " this is the whole counsel of God. You, therefore, who are Christians, should not think much of the time and pains laid out sometimes upon sinners, in those things, both of knowledge and practice, which, it may be, you are already very well acquainted with. There was a time

when you needed the same things to be laid before you ; others then sat by, and heard those things that proved your conversion, though they were acquainted with them, and had heard them many times before.

They forget this, who give way to such a nicety in hearing, as creates an indifference, if not uneasiness, under the plain and necessary addresses to those who are yet in their sins, and to people of a lower class.

Some are all for a word of knowledge, and are ready to despise what is not deep, researched, and peculiar—we knew all this before. As if affecting the mind, impressing the conscience, with a more religious sense of truths that are very well known, and repeating thereupon the same acts of worship to God, which they are in their nature apt to produce, were no part of our religion, when indeed it is the very best part, and that, to which all knowledge is no further excellent, than as it is subservient. Others are all for a word of affection, and that which does not elevate, surprise, and powerfully move the passions, is with them, on the other hand, but a dull story ; forgetting that our business is not only to raise the affections, but to inform the judgment, that you may grow in all wisdom and understanding. In short, we should have but few conversions, and the greatest part of the world would die in their sins, if you were never to hear any thing that you knew before. And, on the other side, if we were always laying again the foundation, there would be but few built up in their most holy faith : it remains, that we endeavour as we can, to approve ourselves such wise stewards, as to give every one his portion in due season ; that while the strong men must have their meat, the babes in Christ may not want the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby ; remembering always, that it is more to our purpose to convert one soul, than merely to entertain a thousand.

5. The infinite sufficiency of the merits of Christ's death and sufferings is seen in this offer.

The ancients used to say, If you would see the Trinity, you must go to Jordan ; where the Son was baptized in the river, the Holy Ghost descending upon him, and the Father's voice was heard, saying, " This is my beloved Son." I may say, If you would see the infinite sufficiency of the merits of Christ, and the exceeding riches of his grace, you must go to Jerusalem, and see to what sort of people he does, in the first place, open the treasures of

mercy. "The unsearchable riches of Christ;" unsearchable indeed, since Jerusalem's sins could not exhaust them. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses."

6. He that could thus destroy sin in its full strength, sin at the height, and in the worst of characters, can easily do it where it is in part already mortified and subdued.

If such sinners as those in Jerusalem are sanctified and saved, will he not carry on the work in a weak Christian? He who was able thus to seize and recover the sturdy offender, that can thus conquer sin in its full strength and vigour, cannot he subdue it when it is half dead and mortified? He that can raise from the dead, can surely continue life where it is begun. It is a comfort to a weak and trembling Christian, to see what Christ has done for the most wicked and hardened sinners; for he that can thus change a wolf into a lamb, can surely preserve the lamb from the devourer.

7. Jerusalem is the mother-church of all churches, the mother of us all.

There the gospel began; thence it had its rise and spring. As at Antioch the Christian name, so at Jerusalem the Christian church, first began. How proud had Rome been, if either of these had been done at that city! If Christ had said, Let repentance and remission of sins be preached to all nations, in my name, beginning at Rome; or if it had been said, The disciples were first called Christians at Rome, they would immediately have cried out, mother-church! They would have made a mighty noise about beginning at Rome, &c. This would have been demonstration for their sham supremacy over all churches. But as truly as Eve was the mother of all living, Jerusalem appears to be the mother of all churches. There Peter preached his first sermon; there he made his first converts, and founded the first church, that is, the first congregation of faithful people. And this is what even they, who compliment Rome with this affected supremacy, are themselves forced to acknowledge, and we too are willing enough to allow her the title of mother, in such sense as the Scripture has done it before us, that is to say, "The mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth." Rev. xvii. 5.

8. This obliges all that have obtained this grace to be of a like merciful and forgiving spirit.

To be implacable is to be like a devil; to be a Christian is to be like this Jesus, who, upon the cross, prayed for his enemies, "Father, forgive them;"—like this Jesus, who, after his resurrection, courted these murderers into the salvation purchased by his death and blood; who gladly bestowed it upon all that would accept it, and waited forty years upon the rest, that they might have time and space to repent. This Jesus is the head, the author, and pattern of our religion; and this religion is certainly like himself, a religion that inspires this godlike temper of mind; a temper particularly chosen out to show the child of God, in one of the most genuine features of his heavenly Father. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

Think once more, to whom it was this offer was going to be made: they had spit in his face, in whose presence angels cover theirs, raptured with delight and joy, and have no sweeter ecstasies than to behold his beauty. They had blindfolded his eyes, which had so often wept over them and their children, and so often turned up to his Father in heaven for them; they struck him, buffeted, scourged him; they mocked him, despised him, and exposed him to the most degrading indignities, that ever attended a crown of thorns, and a dismal cross: he forgave it all, to every one of them that would but repent.

If the history of the world had ever afforded an instance of a good prince, whose government was most rightful, his administration according to the best laws, tempered with equity and moderation; his temper gentle and mild, most affable and condescending; one that treated his subjects as a father would do his children, laying himself out entirely for their benefit and service, so that the people could not but own he had done all things well: how surprising would it be, to find after all, that this good prince was assassinated by those whom he had most obliged! and that there should be any beings on this side of hell capable of such a thing! Well, in the last agonies of his life, he calls some friends about him, and says to this purpose—"I am dying of the wounds they have given me; I had reason to expect a kinder return: however, I forbid

all revenge upon any of those that relent upon it; and, before I die, I order that there be an act of grace forthwith drawn up, and proclaimed for the pardon of my murderers, upon condition only that they be sensible of what they have done, that they acknowledge their fault; and to give them assurance that they may depend upon it, I will have it subscribed, and sealed, with some of that very blood which they have spilt. And since I find myself dying away, I do command with my last breath, that the heralds who shall proclaim this, do send the first copy of it to him that gave me the first wound, and the second to him that struck the deepest"—and so gave up the ghost. How would all the annals have rung of such an instance as this? What a noise would it have made in the world? His name would have stood for the figure of all goodness. Arts and sciences would have lavished all their treasures upon the memory of so much grace. The historian, the orator, the poet, the painter, the statuary would all have employed their utmost skill. Nor would they have refrained from raising altars to so much divinity incarnate. There is a person of whom all this is fact; there is a name, to which all this is due—it is thine, O Jesus, that lovely name, even Jesus, "That hath delivered us from the wrath to come," by dying under our hands, and for our sakes.

Here then, with the apostles, let us stand, and gaze, and wonder, and worship, as they did after he had said these things. Things so divine call for a special act of adoration; the whole God shone forth in his goodness. His miracles did not speak him more divine. "I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath, I will not return to destroy Jerusalem, for I am God, and not man:" such is the language of the Deity, and such the language of this commission.

Jesus! with what a mind and frame of soul didst thou leave this world and go up to heaven? And art thou still the same? Has the highest place in heaven only enlarged thy power of doing good, according to the established economy and order of grace? And is that grace still as free, as full, as extensive, as sufficient as when first offered to Jerusalem? Then I am thy captive; for who can hold out against all this? Who can deny any thing to it? Hear me but in the following prayer—"That some portion of the same Spirit, that renders thee so lovely, may descend upon me, and then I am sure to be beloved by thee; for if this be thy carriage towards thine enemies, what is thy

heart towards them that love thee as their own souls? Let therefore all those passions and affections, that held the apostles in ecstasy of attention, when they beheld at parting the sweet majesty of thy humble grandeur; when they beheld the marks of thy late sufferings, and of present authority, of all power in heaven and earth, and of brotherly love, at once seated in thy divine aspect; when they beheld the heavens opening, the Lord ascending, and followed thee with eyes drowned in love, and stretching, with curious wonder, into the celestial presence; let these same passions and affections so possess my soul, and devote me to thyself and service, that I may never give over looking upwards in expectation, till I shall behold thee in like manner coming the second time, without sin unto salvation."

THE END.

4

THE

FEDERAL CHARACTER OF ADAM,

AND THE

IMPUTATION OF HIS SIN.

BY THE

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FEDERAL CHARACTER OF ADAM.

IN the exhibition of truth by a great mind, there are oftentimes a force and clearness that preclude doubt, and foil evasion. Language is used in its last analysis, and therefore its greatest power, to represent ideas. The form of expression may indeed be varied, and thus perhaps secure a greater logical precision, or a higher rhetorical beauty, or some other perfection of style: but the essential meaning cannot be rendered more obvious and certain, than by the original statement.

This, in a high degree, is true of the celebrated passage in Romans v. 12—21. With its parenthesis and ellipses, its antitheses and comparisons, it is yet a passage whose grand scope and meaning, no exposition can make plainer. Words more fit, more unambiguous, more strong, there are not, by which to express those cardinal doctrines of Christianity—*condemnation by the sin of Adam*, and *justification by the righteousness of Christ*.

With augmented force, do these remarks apply to the 18th verse. It concentrates the sum and energy of the whole passage, as rays in the focal point. There it stands, simple, intelligible, indestructible, declaring in terms too plain and exclusive to be misunderstood or perverted without guilt, that—“as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”

It is proposed in the following pages, briefly to dwell upon the first term of this comparison, and in reliance on the Eternal Spirit, to unfold the great truths which are its basis: to wit,

- I. The representative character of Adam, and
- II. The consequent imputation of his sin to his race.

In elucidation of the

I. First point, I remark—That God created Adam in his own image: endowed not only with intellectual and moral powers, from whose operations and choices, character should result, but with “knowledge, righteousness, and

true holiness," The existence of his faculties, and their exercise in harmony with the moral law of the universe, were co-etaneous. He stood forth from the creative energy of God, not as an infant, whose bodily and mental powers, and whose moral character, time, culture, and trial were requisite to develop and determine; but physically, intellectually, and morally complete for the responsible position assigned him. The image of God, which consists essentially in intellectual endowments, and holy dispositions, was not impressed upon his soul, after his creation, but it is that in which he was made. It was not a subsequent communication, or acquisition, but the original creation.

With Adam thus endowed, and therefore competent to the high transaction, God entered into covenant.* The terms were, obedience and life, or disobedience and death: life in the fulness of its import, and death, in the like extent. In this covenant, the father of the race acted for himself and for them. With him, through him, and in him, they were placed on trial. He stood their legal and moral representative.

Now, what is often and pertinaciously asserted, that this is simply theory, we deny. On the contrary, we affirm it to be fact, authentic beyond reasonable doubt or guiltless evasion; authentic as the testimony of God. If it be not a fact, we maintain, that no reasonings, however specious; no seeming advantages resulting thence to the philosophy of religion, however great; no prepossessions, however cherished, ought to save it from instant and utter abandonment. But if it be a fact, then, no objections, however plausible; no mysteries, however impenetrable; no prejudices, however strong, can set it aside, or invalidate the great truths which it necessarily involves.

I open the Bible. I implore God to teach me. I trace the heaven-illuminated pages. The deep conviction is irresistible. Historic analogy, necessary implication, unambiguous and conclusive comparison, and explicit declaration, all unite in attesting the fact, that in the covenant of works, Adam stood as the Federal Head, and Representative of his race.

* The *fact* of a covenant is not dwelt upon in this tract for the reason that it is seldom or never denied. Those who in various particulars, have receded from the orthodox and ancient faith, deny only the *nature* and *extent* of the covenant as here maintained. See, however, on this point, as well as on the whole subject of these pages, Dr. Dick's Theology, Vol. I. Lect. 45.

Let us glance at each of these forms of evidence.

I. Historic analogy. The principle of representation characterizes every covenant which God has made with or respecting men, unless the covenant with Adam is an exception. The provisions, responsibilities, and effects of every other covenant, have extended equally to the original contracting parties, and to their seed.

Look, for example, at the covenant with Noah. He acted personally for himself; representatively for "every living creature," through "perpetual generations." And who feels any difficulty here, practical or theoretic? Who, when the angry storm roars, and fierce lightnings mingle with terrific thunder, and when the storm is hushed, and through the opening clouds heaven smiles again, who even at this distant epoch, does not feel that the beautiful bow arching the firmament, is God's token to him?

Or, when the genial spring arrays the earth with verdure, and buds and blossoms exhale their fragrance on the air; or when summer and autumnal suns mature their luxuriant harvest; or when winter comes with icicles and snow, who can forget the covenant which secures their unfailling succession, or insulate himself from its blessings?

Look, too, at the covenant with Abraham—a perpetual monument of stupendous grace. "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee." Is it said that the obligations of this covenant with respect to the posterity of the Patriarch, were dependent on their personal election and consent when born, and able thus to choose? Facts, on every page of their history, refute the assertion. What unhappy Israelite now bears not the curse of the covenant broken? Besides, was not the seal of this covenant required to be borne as well by the unknowing babe, as by the intelligent adult; by the babe unconscious of the meaning of the rite, though not unconscious of the pain?

Look also at the covenants of Horeb and Sinai. The assembled tribes gather before the Lord. Their wives and little ones are there. The solemn covenant embraces them. Nor is this all. Said the great Legislator, "Neither with you only do I make this covenant; but with him that is not here with us this day, lest there should be among you man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turneth away from the Lord our God."

Look especially at the covenant with Christ. In that high procedure of the Sacred Three, stands he not the

representative of his people? Is he not their glorious surety?

“O thou, in heaven and earth, the only peace
Found out for mankind under wrath!

Be thou in Adam's room.

As in him perish all men, so in thee
As from a second root, shall be restored
As many as are restored, without thee none.
His crime makes guilty all his sons: thy merit
Imputed, shall absolve them who renounce
Their own, both righteous and unrighteous deeds,
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
Receive new life.”

Now shall this uniform analogy fail when we turn to the covenant of God with Adam? Shall the principle of representation, which characterizes every other federative transaction in which God has engaged, be wanting in this one, the most signal and momentous of them all? Grant that analogical evidence is not decisive; yet if you reject it, you reject one of the most pregnant and beautiful confirmations of revealed religion.

2. Scriptural implication augments the proof. It is strong and unavoidable.

The history of creation, of the institution of society, and government, and of the fall, is compressed into a few paragraphs. Of course there can be but the merest outline of things. Detail were impossible. But study this brief record in the light of subsequent history, and say if it does not necessarily imply that Adam was placed under a constitution, whose observance or whose breach by him was to affect his posterity equally with himself.

Notice the sanction of the covenant. “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Has the fearful curse fallen only on our sire?

Notice the subsequent command. “And God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it.” Was this addressed to Adam only, because to him personally? Or by force of this injunction now, is not the race perpetuated?

Notice the investiture of man as the Lord of creation. “Have dominion,” said Jehovah, “over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Did this dominion cease with the first of men? And if it is less perfect now, than before the apostasy, does not that event furnish the reason?

Pursue still the record after the fatal transgression.

Unto the man he said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." Does the earth groan accursed, no more? Does it bear now no thorns? Does it bloom again like Eden? Do not the sons of Adam eat amid toil and wo?

Unto the woman he said, "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." Did this wo pause upon the unhappy Eve? Is not the sad inheritance perpetual to her daughters?

But these are lighter ills, compared with that which ends them. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Ah, fellow mortal, is the reign of death over? Are there no graves but Adam's? Have thine eyes never looked upon the dead? Comes not thine own hour? And yet the sentence was but this, "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."

We cannot then hesitate. The penalty in its execution, demonstrates the extent of that penalty in the original threatening. And the conclusion is not to be evaded, in reason, which is so affectingly and palpably implied in facts, that the posterity of Adam were included with him, in the provisions and liabilities of the covenant of works.

3. The proof of our position accumulates, if we turn to the comparisons of Scripture. These are unambiguous and determinate. I select two.

Adam and Christ are compared as type and antitype. Says the apostle, "Who was the figure, (the *typos*,) of him that was to come." In some peculiar and eminent respect, therefore, the one corresponded to and prefigured the other. In what respect?

In *physical characteristics*? In form, feature, strength, proportion, beauty? Was Adam the grand specimen of humanity, or in Miltonic phrase—"The goodliest man of men since born," and in this the type of Him who was "fairer than the sons of men?" Away with the unworthy thought!

Do *mental endowments* then furnish the point of comparison? But in mental endowments, the sire of men shared in common with his race. He was gifted with no faculty which is not possessed by them, and therefore was as truly in this respect the type of Aristotle, or of Bacon, as of Jesus Christ. And grant him to have been *eminent* in intellectual *capacity*, as questionless he was, grant him to have possessed a comprehensiveness of understanding, a

depth and power of reason, a brilliancy of imagination unequalled since; even then, he was only more *perfectly*, but not more *really* the type of Christ, than were all other men before the incarnation.

Shall we seek then the affirmed resemblance in the *moral qualities* of each? Shall we say, Adam was made in the image of God, and thus was the type of Him "who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person?" But this, like the previous points also, is foreign to the apostle's argument. He is declaring whence came death,

"And all our wo,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat."

Besides, it is liable to the objection, that in this respect too, Adam was no more truly a type of Christ than were others. Unfallen angels, and redeemed saints, as well as he, bore this glorious similitude of the Son of God.

Alike fruitless will be our search, if we turn to that chief Arminian evasion, that Adam was the *natural head* of his race, i. e. he was the *first* of men from whom all else have sprung, and thus a type of Christ, who is the *first of his*. For conceding that there exists between Christ and his seed a natural relation in any ordinary meaning of the term, (which we deny,) still, every parent is as much the natural head of his offspring, as was Adam of his, and therefore if the apostle intends only this *natural headship*, every parent before the advent of Christ, was as really his type, as was the first parent of all.

In all these particulars, the sons of Adam *share* with him, and this fact invalidates them all, as constituting his declared typical resemblance to the Lord Jesus Christ. In no definable, in no imaginable respect, did he differ from his seed, so as to constitute in *distinction* from them a type of Christ, unless, as he was their representative in the covenant of works, even as Christ was the representative of his seed, in the covenant of grace.

Contemplate also that illustrious comparison whose point and power are so conspicuous in the following verse: "Therefore, *as* by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, *even so* by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life;" i. e. justification comes by Christ, *as* condemnation comes by Adam. The *mode* of the latter is here assumed

to be known, and it is introduced to illustrate the mode of the former. The issue then is brief. How are we justified by Christ? How, but by the imputation of his righteousness, and this on the ground of covenant representation? What if human reason is dazzled by the brightness, and baffled by the mysteries that blend in this high procedure of eternal love? What if human pride recoils from its reception with a strength which God only can overcome? It matters not. The wonderful truth is declared from heaven. It is embosomed in light. In every age, it has been the confidence and the joy of believers. In the covenant of grace, the incarnate Son was the representative of his seed. He assumed their liabilities in law. He endured for them the penalty of the law violated. His whole obedience, therefore, or righteousness, according to the constitution of mercy, is *imputatively* theirs. So theirs, that by it, they are justified; justice and grace alike rejoice and triumph in their salvation. The believing sinner shall plant his footsteps in the city of God, arrayed in a perfect and most glorious righteousness; a righteousness, not inherent, but imputed, which eternal love provided, and eternal justice delights to accept. Who will deny this? Who, presume to blot a truth so attested, from the documents of redemption? Who that feels for the soul of man, will wish to quench the sun in the firmament of grace?

The conclusion is unavoidable. We are condemned by the offence of Adam, *as* we are justified by the righteousness of Christ; i. e. in either case by *imputation* based on federal representation.

4. The last form of proof suggested on this point, is explicit declaration.

I speak not of *words* but of *things*. High moral truths are declared not necessarily in the phrases of system.

The representative character of Adam is declared in the Scriptures, in fact. To go no further, witness the whole passage in Romans v. 12—21.

“By *one* man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.”*

* The apostle adds “because that all have sinned.” It is by no means certain that the true rendering of this verse, is not that which even Whitby maintains, viz: “And so death passed upon all men through him in whom all have sinned.” Every scholar knows that this may be the true rendering, and Dr. Junkin has shown by a critical examination of the verse, that there are strong if not insuperable,

“Through the offence of *one*, many are dead.”

“And not as it was by *one* that sinned, so is the gift. For the judgment was by *one* to condemnation.”

“By one man’s offence death reigned by *one*.”

“By the offence of *one*, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”

“By *one* man’s disobedience, many were made sinners.”

Whence this extraordinary emphasis upon *one*?

Whence this constant attributing to *one* offence of *one* man, of the condemnation which rests upon all? Can language be more explicit?

Subject to a closer scrutiny the 18th verse. “By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation;” i. e. nor can an impartial criticism elicit from the words an adverse meaning—all men are judicially condemned on account of the sin of one man. Mark the expression. Not simply deriving a moral taint by birth, which resulting in actual transgression, subjects the race to penal suffering; but judicially condemned by one offence of one man. Says the apostle, “judgment to condemnation.” Judgment presupposes trial. Condemnation implies sin, personal or imputed. What stronger declaration, then, in fact, can there be, that in the one offence of one man which brought condemnation upon all, there was in him a representative participation by all. In the government especially of God, condemnation does not exist apart from guilt. How then under that government, may it come upon all men—not by their personal sins—that is neither the affirmation nor the argument of the apostle here; but, by the one sin of Adam, except they were legally involved in that sin? And how legally involved in it, except representatively by him?

But resting from the proof of this first position, let us advert to the objections alleged against it.

1. The personal identity of Adam and his race is a theory exploded. Indeed it is questionable if it ever existed, except in the prolific fancy of theological caricaturists.

philological objections, to every other. (See Junkin on Justification, pp. 12, 131.)

But take the passage as we have it. “And so death passed upon all men because that all have sinned.” All die, because all have sinned. See that weeping mother. Death has passed upon her babe. Yesterday it was born. Had it sinned? Assuredly. If we believe the apostle there is no alternative. It had sinned. How? Personally? Actually? Impossible.

The personal identity of differing millions, is one thing; their representative oneness, in a specified legal and moral act, is another thing. The latter is common and intelligible; the former, impossible and absurd. The follies therefore, resulting from this theory, with which chivalrous combatants have ever endeavoured to encumber and deform the federal headship of Adam, and the affiliated doctrines, may be left in undisturbed repose.

2. A more specious objection to this great doctrine of the Scriptures is constituted by its alleged injustice. That the moral condition of all men should have been made to depend on the representative acts of one, in whose appointment they had no election, is pronounced unreasonable and unjust.

Let us bring this objection to the bar of reason.

The procedures of God involve the highest reason. What he does is demonstrated just, because He does it. But, as we have shown, this identical principle of representation characterizes in fact all the covenant transactions of God with men, and it is therefore as unimpeachable in the case before us, as in every other. By its adoption in his government, God has impressed upon it his own signet; and wilt thou, fellow sinner, who art but dust, impeach God?

But this principle pervades also the whole constitution of domestic and civil society.

The father is the legal representative of his children, during their minority; and this, not by their previous or subsequent election, but always without it, and often against it, by the law of nature, of society and of God. In certain cases he can bind them not only temporarily, but for ever.

All civil government is, to a greater or less extent, representative. Nor do the varying modes in which it may be constituted, exclude this elemental feature. The hereditary monarch is as really in law the representative of his subjects, in all official acts, as is the republican president of his constituents. In either case, and equally, the many are responsible for the acts of the one. Personal consent essential to the law of representation! Why, in what we fondly deem the most perfect government on earth, what multitudes have no part, and cannot have in the election of that government, who yet are subject to its authority, and in their proportion, responsible for its acts!

It is idle then to exclaim against a principle, in an isolated instance of its application, which is so legitimated, I

had almost said, by its ubiquity in the governments both of men and of God.

But further. Arraign the justice of this divine constitution; nay, its signal benevolence, at the tribunal of conscience.

Suppose Adam to have remained holy and therefore immortal, to the present moment. Suppose that his posterity had also been kept by the power of God. At this distant era from creation, God announces his purpose to place us on moral trial, and directs us to the election of a representative in whose person, and by whose acts, the great question shall be decided. Would not every eye spontaneously turn upon the venerable sire of all? Would not every voice proclaim him chosen by acclamation? Who can doubt it?

Or suppose with Arminians, that the judicial effects of Adam's sin had terminated upon himself, and that the moral depravation with which every human soul begins existence, were exclusively a result of the law that like begets like.

Suppose even with Pelagians and Socinians, that all the effects of Adam's sin, terminated upon himself, as it respects original moral character. In place of federal representation in him, and condemnation by him, substitute the doctrine of successive and personal probation. How are all our previous difficulties immeasurably enhanced! What impenetrable, deepening gloom settles upon the character and government of God!

Look upon that infant, just ushered into life, and placed on moral trial. With no knowledge that he is on such trial; with no conception of law or penalty; with no power to discriminate between good and evil; unable to appreciate the tendencies of conduct; with passions strengthening hourly, and clamouring for indulgence; with sights continually pouring on the eye, which pollute while they allure; subject to instructions and examples that inevitably corrupt; with all surrounding moral influences pressing upon the soul to destroy it, and almost no power of resistance, and yet upon fair and solemn trial! Is it credible? Is it scriptural?

Add to these things what the Scriptures plainly teach, and Arminians admit; innate corruption, aversion to holiness, and bias to sin, and this solemn trial becomes a solemn mockery!

But reverse the case. Conceive, what we maintain the

Scriptures reveal as the fact, that this infant has already been placed on trial, by representation in Adam. The interests involved were indeed awfully momentous, but the trial was most fair. No circumstance was wanting to render a favourable result almost certain. Our first father stood then in the resplendent image of God. He was indeed susceptible of temptation, but he had the power of resistance beyond what his offspring can have. He was aware of the responsibility of his position. His understanding was mature. His reason was vigorous. His conscience was perfect. Every sensation filled him with gratitude. Every emotion was holy. Every affection fixed with supreme delight on God, and bound him to his throne!

Say then, thou that cavillest at this high truth, lay thine hand upon thine heart, and before God tell me, which of these trials wouldst thou choose? Which most fair and kind to thee? Which most evincive of eternal justice and eternal love?

Asking yet the indulgence of the reader, I proceed to a brief view of the

II. Second point proposed—the Imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity.

The truth of this is involved necessarily in the truth of the first position. For the elemental and constitutive feature in the law of representation is, that the represented are bound, for good or evil, by the acts of the representative. His acts are imputatively and legally theirs. The consequences come upon them.

But besides being a necessary result of the first position, essentially involved in the whole argument which establishes that, this doctrine has an affecting and conclusive proof in the actual moral condition of the race.

If it be true, as we have shown, that Adam was the federal head of his posterity, and that therefore his sin is imputed to them, we should of course expect to find them commencing existence subject to precisely those penal evils, which were denounced upon him, and not otherwise. I repeat it, not otherwise. A just ground for the infliction of penal suffering upon men, cannot exist previous to their own existence, except in the manner we have indicated. Under the administration of a wise and holy God, condemnation does not precede trial and guilt.

What then are the facts in the case? Do the posterity of Adam commence existence subject to those evils which were the threatened penalty of his transgression? Alas!

the proof is obvious, as it is melancholy. We live on the surface of one vast sepulchre! The dead in unnumbered millions are within! The dying, in crowds upon crowds, are without! Every breeze is freighted with human groans!

Observe the expression. We commence existence, subject to these evils. They do not come upon us only when we have in our own persons sinned; actually, intelligently, and from choice sinned. We are subject to them from the first moment of existence. We are born under the visible frowns of God. The fact demonstrates our doctrine. It admits neither evasion nor denial.

Look upon that dying babe. Yesterday only it was introduced to life. It is guilty of no actual sin. It cannot be. But it is dying! Hear it moan! See it gasp! There, it is a corpse! To-morrow, and weeping affection will yield it to the grave. This is temporal death.

Turn to another, surviving the cries and pains of infancy. Watch the unfolding faculties. While instinct yet supplies the place of intelligence and reason, what unequivocal indications of will strangely stubborn and imperious to be gratified! Trace the development of petulance, passion, pride, selfishness, resentment, and deceit. How early all! A corrupt nature is unfailingly indicated from the first. This is spiritual death.

From infancy and childhood trace the moral progress through youth and manhood. Passions gather strength. Sinful habits cast their chain upon the soul. What engrossment in self! What aversion to God! What insensibility in sin! In vain conscience accuses. In vain religion is enforced. In vain mercy calls. The final hour comes. Impenitent and unshriven the soul shrieks and sinks forever. This is eternal death.

I repeat it, then, the doctrine is demonstrated by the facts. Stronger proof there cannot be. The whole and the identical penalty denounced upon Adam, comes upon his seed. Their liability to it exists previous to personal transgression, even from the womb.

It is executed, in part at least, upon multitudes, before they can violate known law. And if it is not executed upon every soul of man, in all its extent, it is entirely because of the imputed righteousness of the second Adam, even Christ.

Does any one say, "there yet are mysteries here?" Where, in the universe of God, are there not mysteries? Mysteries here! Ah! there are more than mysteries in

every other view of this subject;—not only that which is beyond reason, but that which is essentially and immutably against both reason and justice. The mysteries here are those only to which facts, reason, and revelation, lead us. And when, under their guidance, I come to the inaccessible light in which God dwells, and am dazzled and blinded by its splendour, I will not turn sceptic. I will not demand that the thoughts and procedures of the Infinite shall be shrunk to the dimensions of my limited understanding! No. God is great. God is holy. I will bow down. I will believe. I will adore.

Reader! This great truth has a direct and solemn relation to you. You are a child of Adam. In his probation, you were tried; in his fall, you fell. As the result, you were born in sin, and under sentence of death. At times, you are conscious of moral depravity. Solemn providences alarm you. You dread to look into the open grave. You fear to die. You shrink from the scenes of the judgment. This consciousness and these fears, you have had from your earliest recollection.

To original, you have added, actual sin. The depravity of nature has developed itself in life, imparting its complexion of guilt and gloom to your whole moral history. Voluntarily, intelligently and repeatedly you have broken the law of God.

In these circumstances, I affectionately tell you, you are ruined. You may attempt to evade the conclusion. You may even indignantly deny it. But the melancholy truth remains—you are ruined. The conviction of this, is the first step in your recovery. It is in this state that mercy comes to the sinner. It is from this point that she leads him through the gate of life, to the throne of glory. It is here alone that he feels his need of a Saviour.

Come then, thou lost in Adam, admit thy ruin, renounce thyself and penitently, believingly rest, for salvation upon Christ. He is the surety of a better covenant.

“In him the sons of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.”

In him, thou mayest have pardon, peace, righteousness and heaven for ever.

Brethren in the ministry! Ours is the high duty of preaching the Gospel. That Gospel is comprised in the two grand doctrines of condemnation by the offence of

Adam, and justification by the righteousness of Christ. The first is as essential to be proclaimed as the last. Thanks unto God, that we may tell of Calvary; but to do it with effect, we must first tell of Eden. The crucifixion is unintelligible, dissociated from the apostasy. The conviction of ruin by the first Adam, must precede the desire of salvation by the second.

A characteristic and mournful feature of much modern preaching, is the neglect or rejection of these truths. The awful fact of human condemnation has given place to the glowing enforcement of human obligation. The ability of men has been magnified until their ruin has been forgot. Somewhat of detriment, circumstantial, however, rather than essential, has been incurred by the fall; but then it lies within the scope of self-reparation. Redemption even is but an unparalleled moral display, designed to impress the minds of creatures, and not a real satisfaction to the law and government of God. While regeneration is only a change of purpose, and not a renovation of nature.

Brethren, this is not the Gospel. It can avail nought, in the restoration of an apostate race to God. It can foster no adequate conviction in the bosom of guilt. It can bring no solid hope to the despairing. It can wake no songs of joy in the presence of angels. The cross is reared amid ruins. Our mission is to the lost. If we herald the offer of mercy, rich beyond conception, we must also fix the charge of guilt, original, actual, and enormous. And if we do it with tenderness and tears, as becomes men who are in the same condemnation, still, in fidelity to man and to God, must we do it. Unhesitatingly, and every where must we proclaim death by Adam, and life by Jesus Christ.

Thus only may we be instrumental of rescuing some of the shattered barks of Eden, and mooring them eternally to the throne of God—to whom be all and endless praise!

THE END.

5

CHRIST PRECIOUS

TO

ALL TRUE BELIEVERS.

BY

PRESIDENT DAVIES.



PHILADELPHIA :

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.



CHRIST

PRECIOUS TO ALL TRUE BELIEVERS.

Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious. 1 Pet. ii. 7.

Blessed be God ! though a great part of the creation have no love to Jesus Christ ; though fallen spirits, both in flesh and without flesh, both upon earth and in hell, neglect him, or profess themselves open enemies to him, yet he is precious ; precious, not only in himself, not only to his Father, not only to the spirits in heaven, who behold his full glory without a veil, but precious to some even in our guilty world ; precious to a sort of persons of our sinful race, who make no great figure in mortal eyes, who have no idea of their own goodness, who are mean, unworthy creatures in their own view, and who are generally despicable in the view of others ; I mean, he is precious to all true believers. And, though they are but few comparatively in our world ; though there are, I am afraid, but few additions made to them ; yet, blessed be God, there are some believers even upon our guilty globe ; and I doubt not, but this address may come into the hands of some of these happy persons.

My believing brethren, if I may venture to claim kindred with you, I am now entering upon a design, which I know you have much at heart ; and that is, to make the blessed Jesus more precious to you, and, if possible, to recommend him to the love of the crowd that neglect him. You know, alas ! that you love him but little, but very little, compared to his infinite excellency and your obligations to him ; and you know too that multitudes love him not at all. Whatever they profess, their practice shows that their carnal mind is enmity against him. This you often see, and the sight affects your hearts. It deeply affects you to think so much excellency should be neglected and despised, and so much love meet with such base returns of ingratitude. And you cannot but pity your poor fellow sinners, that they are so blind to the brightest glory and their own highest interest ; and that they should perish, through wilful neglect of their Deliverer ; perish as it were, within reach of the hand stretched out to save them. This is indeed a very affecting, very lamentable, but, alas ! a very common sight. And will you not then bid me God speed in my attempt to

recommend this precious, though neglected, Jesus? Will you not contribute your share towards my success in so pious and benevolent a design by your earnest prayers? Now, shall not the interceding sigh rise to heaven from every heart, and every soul be cast into a praying posture? I should hope to discharge my duty with more comfort and advantage, if you would afford me this assistance. And surely such of you cannot deny me this aid, who desire that Jesus may become still more precious to your own hearts, and that he may be the object of universal love from all the sons of men, who at present are disaffected to him.

“To you that believe, *He* is precious.” He!—Who? Is it Mammon, the God of the world? Is it pleasure, or honour? No; none of these is the darling of the believing heart. But it is he who is the uppermost in every pious heart; he, who is the first in the thoughts and affections; he, whom every friend of his must know, even without a name; if it be but said of him, *he* is precious, this is enough to distinguish him from all others. “If it be he the apostle means,” may every believer say, “who is most precious to my soul; then I can easily point him out, though without a name. It must be JESUS; for, O! it is he that is most precious to me.” The connexion also directs us to the same person. It is he the apostle means, whom he had just described as a living stone, chosen of God, and the precious, the chief corner-stone, the great foundation of the church, that spiritual temple of God, so stately and glorious, and reaching from earth to heaven; it is this precious stone, this heavenly jewel, that is precious to believers.

“To you that believe, he is *precious* ;” that is, He is highly valued by you. You esteem him of infinite worth, and he has the highest place in your affections. He is dearer to your hearts than all other persons and things. The original word requires a still stronger translation: “To you that believe, he is *preciousness* ;” preciousness in the abstract, all preciousness, and nothing but preciousness; a precious stone without one blemish. Or, it may be translated with a little variation, “To you that believeth, he is *honour* .” It confers the highest honour upon you to be related to him; and you esteem it your highest honour to sustain that relation. Though Jesus and his cross are names of reproach in the unbelieving world, you glory in them, and they reflect a real glory upon you. Or, “To

you that believe, there is honour.”* Honour is now conferred upon you in your being built as living stones in the temple of God upon this precious foundation; and honour is reserved for you in heaven, where the crown of righteousness awaits you.

“To you which *believe*, he is precious;” that is to say, the value of this precious stone, is, alas! unknown to the crowd. It is so far from being precious, that it is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; a stone disallowed of men (v. 4.) rejected even by the builders (v. 7.); but you believers, ye happy few, have another estimate of it. Faith enables you to see the glories of the blessed Jesus; and when you know him through this medium, you cannot but love him. The blind world neglect the Lord of Glory, because they know him not: but you believers know him, and therefore to you he is precious. Faith presents him to your view in a just light, and directs you to form a proper estimate of him. It is truly lamentable that such real excellency should be despised; but so it will be with the world till they believe. The mere speculative recommendation of their reason, the prepossessions of education in his favour, and the best human means, are not sufficient to render Jesus precious to them. Nothing but saving faith can effect this.

“To you *therefore* which believe, he is precious.” This text is an inference drawn from what had been previously said; and the reasoning seems to be this: “This stone is precious to God, therefore it is precious to you that believe. You have the same estimate of Jesus Christ which God the Father has; and for that very reason he is precious to you, because he is precious to him.” That this is the connexion, will appear, if you look back to the 4th and 6th verses, where you find Jesus described as “a chief corner-stone, laid in Zion, elect or chosen, and precious—disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious.” Men wickedly disapprove this stone, and even many of the professed builders of his church reject him. This, says the apostle, must be granted. But this is no objection to his real worth. He is precious to God, who knows him best, and who is a perfect judge of real excellency; and for that

* The pronoun *he* is not in the original; but the passage reads thus, “To you who believe, honour.”

very reason he is precious to you that believe. Faith teaches you to look upon persons and things in the same light in which God views them; it makes your sentiments conformed to his. Christ is the Father's beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and he is your beloved Saviour, in whom you are well pleased.

Is it any wonder that Jesus should be precious to believers, when he is so precious in himself, and in his offices—so precious to the angelic hosts, and so precious to his Father?

1. He is precious in himself. He is Immanuel, God-man; and consequently, whatever excellencies belong either to the divine or human nature, centre in him. If wisdom, power, and goodness, divine or human, created or uncreated, can render him worthy of the highest affection, he has a just claim to it. Whatever excellencies, natural or moral, appear in any part of the universe, they are but faint shadows of his beauty and glory. "All things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things; and by him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17: and whatever excellencies are in the effect must be eminently in the cause. You do not wonder nor censure, when you see men delighted with the glories of the sun, and the various luminaries of the sky: you do not wonder nor blame when they take pleasure in the beautiful prospects of nature, or in that rich variety of good things, which earth, and sea, and every element furnishes for the support of man, or the gratification of his senses; you do not wonder and blame, when they are struck with moral beauty, when you see them admire and approve wisdom, benevolence, justice, veracity, meekness and mercy: you never think it strange, much less censurable, that men should love these things, and count them precious: and can you be astonished, can you ridicule or find fault, that Jesus is precious to poor believers? If the copy be so fair and lovely, who would not love the original, that has eyes to behold it? Believers see so much of the worth of Christ as is sufficient to captivate their hearts, and to convince them of their guilt in loving him no more; and the clearer their views are of him, the more they are mortified at the criminal defects of their love; for they know that he deserves infinitely more!

2. The Lord Jesus is precious in his offices. His mediatorial office is generally subdivided into three parts, namely,

that of a Prophet, of a Priest, and of a King : and how precious is Christ in each of these !

As a Prophet, how sweet are his instructions to a bewildered soul ! How precious the words of his lips, which are the words of eternal life ! How delightful to sit and hear him teach the way of duty and happiness, revealing the Father, and the wonders of the invisible state ! How transporting to hear him declare upon what terms an offended God may be reconciled ! a discovery beyond the searches of all the sages and philosophers of the heathen world ! How reviving is it to listen to his gracious promises and invitations ! promises and invitations to the poor, the weary, and heavy-laden, to the broken-hearted, and even to the chief of sinners ! The word of Christ has been the treasure, the support, and the joy of believers in all ages. " I have esteemed the words of his mouth," says Job, " more than my necessary food," Job xxiii. 12. It is this precious word the Psalmist so often and so highly celebrates. He celebrates it as " more to be desired than gold ; yea, than much fine gold : sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb," Psalm xix. 10. " O how-I love thy law !" says he : " it is my meditation all the day," Psalm cxix. 97. " How sweet are thy words unto my taste ! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth," ver. 103. " The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," ver. 72. " Behold, I have longed after thy precepts," ver. 40. " Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage, ver. 54. " In my affliction, thy word hath quickened me," ver. 50. " Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction," ver. 92. This is the language of David, in honour of this divine Prophet, near three thousand years ago, when Christ had not revealed the full gospel to the world, but only some rays of it shone through the veil of the Mosaic dispensation. And must not believers now, who live under the more complete and clear instructions of the great Prophet, entertain the same sentiments of him ? Yes, to such of you as believe, even in this age, he is most precious.

But this external instruction is not all that Christ as a Prophet communicates ; and, indeed, did he do no more than this, it would answer no valuable end. The mind of man, in his present fallen state, like a disordered eye, is incapable of perceiving divine things in a proper light, however clearly they are revealed ; and therefore, till the perceiving faculty be rectified, all external revelation is in vain, and is only like

opening a fair prospect to a blind eye. Hence this great Prophet carries his instruction further, not only by proposing divine things in a clear light by his word, but inwardly enlightening the mind, and enabling it to perceive what is revealed by his Spirit. And how precious are these internal instructions! How sweet to feel a disordered, dark mind, opening to admit the shinings of heavenly day; to perceive the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the beauties of holiness, and the majestic wonders of the eternal world! Speak, ye that know by happy experience, and tell how precious Jesus appears to you, when, by his own blessed Spirit, he scatters the cloud that benighted your understandings, and lets in the rays of his glory upon your admiring souls; when he opens your eyes to see the wonders contained in his law, and the glorious mysteries of his gospel. What a divine glory is then thrown upon every page of the sacred volume! Then it indeed appears the book of God, God-like, and worthy its Author. O, precious Jesus! let us all this day feel thine enlightening influences, that experience may teach us how sweet they are! Come, great Prophet! come, and make thine own Spirit our teacher, and then shall we be divinely wise.

Again, the Lord Jesus is precious to believers as a great High Priest. As a High Priest, he made a complete atonement for sin by his propitiatory sacrifice on the cross; and he still makes intercession for the transgressors on his throne in heaven. It was his sacrifice that satisfied the demands of the law and justice of God, and rendered him reconcilable to the guilty, upon terms consistent with his honour and the rights of his government. It was by virtue of this sacrifice that he procured pardon for sin, the favour of God, freedom from hell, and eternal life for condemned, obnoxious rebels. And such of you, who have ever felt the pangs of a guilty conscience, and obtained relief from Jesus Christ, can tell how precious was his atoning sacrifice. How did it ease your self-tormenting consciences, and heal your broken hearts! How did it change the frowns of an angry God into smiles of love, and your trembling apprehensions of vengeance into delightful hopes of mercy! How precious did Jesus appear, with a pardon in his hand, with atoning blood gushing from his opened veins, and making his cross, as it were, the key to open the gates of heaven for your admission! Blessed Saviour! our great High Priest! thus appear to us with all thy robes, dyed in thine own blood, and cause us all to feel the efficacy of thy propitiation.

Let us next turn our eyes upwards, and view this great High Priest as our Intercessor in the presence of God. There he appears as a lamb that was slain, bearing the memorials of his sacrifice, and putting the Father in remembrance of the blessings purchased for his people. There he urges it as his pleasure, as his authoritative will, that these blessings should in due time be conferred upon those for whom they were purchased. In this authoritative manner he could intercede even in the days of his humiliation upon earth, because of the Father's covenant engagements with him, the accomplishment of which he has a right to demand, as well as humbly to petition: "Father, I will—I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory," John xvii. 24. Now how precious must Christ appear in the character of Intercessor! That the friendless sinner should have an all-prevailing advocate in the court of heaven to undertake his cause! that the great High Priest should offer up the grateful incense of his own merit, with the prayers of the saints! that he should add the sanction of his authoritative will to the humble petition of faith! that he should urge the claims of his people, as his own claims, founded upon an unchangeable covenant with his Father, of which he has fully performed the conditions required! that he should not intercede occasionally, but always appear in the holy of holies as the constant ever-living Intercessor, and maintain the same interest, the same importunity at all times, even when the petitions of his people languish upon their lips! What delightful reflections are these! and how warmly may they recommend the Lord Jesus to the hearts of believers! How just is the apostle's inference, "Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; and, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," Heb. x. 21—23. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;" for this reason, because "he ever liveth to make intercession for them," Heb. vii. 25. May each of us intrust his cause to this all-prevailing Advocate, and we shall certainly gain it. The unchangeable promise has passed his lips, "that whatsoever we ask of the Father in faith and in his name, he will give it us," John xvi. 23.

Let me add, the kingly office of Christ is precious to believers. As King he gives laws; laws perfectly wise and good, and enforced with the most important sanctions—everlasting rewards and punishments. And how delightful,

how advantageous, to live under such a government ! to have our duty discovered with so much clearness and certainty, which frees us from so many painful anxieties, and to have such powerful motives to obedience, which have a tendency to infuse vigour and spirit into our endeavours ! As King, he appoints ordinances of worship. And how sweet to converse with him in these ordinances, and to be freed from perplexity about that manner of worship which God will accept, without being exposed to that question, so confounding to will-worshippers, " Who hath required this at your hands ? " As King, he is Head over all things to his church, and manages the whole creation, as is most subservient to her good. The various ranks of creatures in heaven, earth, and hell, are subject to his direction and control ; and they must all co-operate for the good of his people. He reclaims, confounds, subdues, or destroys their enemies, according to his pleasure. And how precious must he be in this august character to the feeble helpless believer ! To have an almighty friend sitting at the helm of the universe, with the supreme management of all things in his hands ; to be assured, that even the most injurious enemy can do the believer no real or lasting injury, but shall at length concur to work his greatest good ; and that, come what will, it shall go well with him, and he shall at last be made triumphant over all difficulty and opposition, O ! what transporting considerations are here !

But this is not the only exercise of the royal power of Christ. He not only makes laws and ordinances, and restrains the enemies of his people, but he exercises his power inwardly upon their hearts. He is the King of souls ; he reigns in the hearts of his subjects, and how infinitely dear and precious is he in this view ! To feel him subdue the rebellion within, sweetly bending the stubborn heart into willing obedience, and reducing every thought into a cheerful captivity to himself, writing his law upon the heart, making the dispositions of his subjects a transcript of his will, corresponding to it, like wax to the seal—how delightful is all this ! O the pleasures of humble submission ! How pleasant to lie as subjects at the feet of this mediatorial King, without arrogating the sovereignty ourselves, for which we are utterly insufficient ! Blessed Jesus ! thus reign in our hearts ! thus subdue the nations to the obedience of faith ! " Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness ;

and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things," Psalm xiv. 3, 4. "Send the rod of thy strength out of Sion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies," Psalm cx. 2; rule us, and subdue the rebel in our hearts.

Thus you see the Lord Jesus is precious to believers in all the views of his mediatorial office. But he is not precious to them alone; he is beloved as far as known, and the more known the more beloved: which leads me to add,

3. He is precious to all the angels of heaven.

Peter tells us, that the things now reported to us by the gospel are "things which the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 12. Jesus is the wonder of angels now in heaven; and he was so even when he appeared in the form of a servant upon earth. Paul mentions it as one part of the great mystery of godliness, that "God manifested in the flesh, was seen of angels," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Angels saw him, and admired and loved him in the various stages of his life, from his birth, to his return to his native heaven. Hear the manner in which angels celebrated his entrance into our world. One of them spread his wings, and flew with joyful haste to a company of poor shepherds, that kept their midnight watches in the field, and abruptly told the news, of which his heart was full: "Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host." Crowds of angels left their stations in the celestial court in that memorable hour, and hovered over the place where their incarnate God lay in a manger. Jesus, the object of their love, was gone down to earth, and they must follow him; for who would not be where Jesus is? Men, ungrateful men, were silent upon that occasion, but angels tuned their song of praise. The astonished shepherds heard them sing, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will toward men," Luke ii. 10—14. When he bringeth his first begotten into the world, the Father saith, "Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. i. 6. This seems to intimate that all the angels crowded round the manger, where the incarnate God lay, and paid him their humble worship. We are told, that when the devil had finished his long process of temptations, after forty days, and had left him, the "angels came and ministered unto him," Matt. iv. 11. When this disagreeable companion had left him, his old attendants were

ready to renew their service to him. In every hour of difficulty they were prompt to his aid. He was seen of angels in his hard conflict in the garden of Gethsemane; and one of them "appeared unto him from heaven strengthening him," Luke xxii. 43. With what wonder, sympathy, and readiness, did this angelic assistant raise his prostrate Lord from the cold ground, wipe off his bloody sweat, and support his sinking spirit, with divine encouragements! But O! ye blessed angels, ye usual spectators and adorers of the divine glories of our Redeemer, with what astonishment and horror were you struck, when you saw him expire on the cross!

"Around the bloody tree
Ye pressed with strong desire
That wondrous sight to see,—
The Lord of Life expire.
And, could your eyes
Have known a tear,
It had dropped there
In sad surprise."—DODDRIDGE.

Ye also hovered around his tomb, while he lay in the prison of the grave. The weeping woman, and his other friends, found you stationed there in their early impatient visits to the sepulchre. O what wonders then appeared to your astonished minds! Could you, that pry so deep into the secrets of heaven, you that know so well what divine love can do, could you have thought that even the love of Deity could have gone so far! could have laid the Lord of Glory, a pale, mangled, senseless corpse, in the mansions of the dead? Was not this a strange surprise even to you? And, when the appointed day began to dawn, with what eager and joyful haste did ye roll away the stone, and set open the prison doors, that the rising Conqueror might march forth!

"And when arrayed in light,
The shining Conqueror rode,
Ye hailed his rapturous flight,
Up to the throne of God;
And waved around
Your golden wings,
And struck your strings
Of sweetest sound."—DODDRIDGE.

When he ascended on high, he was attended "with the chariots of God, which are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," Psalm lxxviii. 17, 18. And now, when he

is returned to dwell among them, Jesus is still the favourite of angels. His name sounds from all their harps, and his love is the subject of their everlasting song. John once heard them, and I hope we shall ere long hear them saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 11, 12.—This is the song of angels, as well as of the redeemed from among men :

"Jesus, the Lord, their harps employs ;
 Jesus, my love, they sing ;
 Jesus, the name of both our joys,
 Sounds sweet from every string."—WATTS.

O could we see what is doing in heaven, at this instant, how would it surprise, astonish, and confound us ! Do you think the name of Jesus is of as little importance there as in our world ? Do you think there is one lukewarm or disaffected heart among ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ? O, no ! there his love is the ruling-passion of every heart, and the grand theme of every song. And is he so precious to angels ? to angels, who are less interested in him, and less indebted to him ? and must he not be precious to poor believers, bought with his blood, and entitled to life by his death ? Yes, you that believe, have an angelic disposition in this respect ; you love Jesus, though unseen, as well as they who see him as he is, though, alas ! in a far less degree. But, to bring his worth to the highest standard of all, I add,

4. He is infinitely precious to his Father, who thoroughly knows him, and is an infallible judge of real worth. He proclaimed more than once from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye him." "Behold," says he, "my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. xlii. 1. He is called by the names of the tenderest endearment ; his Son, his own Son, his dear Son, the Son of his love. He is a stone, disallowed indeed of men. If their approbation were the true standard of merit, he must be looked upon as a very worthless, insignificant being, unworthy of their thoughts and affections. But let men form what estimate of him they please, he is "chosen of God, and precious." And shall not the love of the omniscient God have weight with believers to love him too ? Yes, the apostle expressly draws the inference ; he is precious to God, therefore to

you that believe he is precious. It is the characteristic of even the meanest believer, that he is God-like. He is a partaker of the divine nature, and therefore views things, in some measure, as God does; and is affected towards them as God is, though there be an almost infinite difference as to the degree. He prevailingly loves what God loves, and that because God loves it.

And now, what think you of Christ? Will you not think of him as believers do? If so, he will be precious to your hearts, above all things, for the future. Or, if you disregard this standard of excellence, as being but the estimate of fallible creatures, will you not think of him as angels do—angels, those bright intelligences, to whom he reveals his unveiled glories, who are more capable of perceiving and judging of him, and who, therefore, must know him better than you; angels, who have had a long acquaintance with him at home, if I may so speak, for near six thousand years, as God, that is, ever since their creation, and for near two thousand years as God-man? Since angels, then, who know him so thoroughly, love him so highly, certainly you may safely venture to love him; you might safely venture to love him implicitly, upon their word. He died for you, which is more than ever he did for them, and will you not love him after all this love? It is not the mode in our world to think much of him, but it is the mode in heaven. Yes, blessed be God! if he be despised and rejected of men, he is not despised and rejected of angels. Angels, that know him best, love him above all; and, as far as their capacity will allow, do justice to his merit; and this is a very comfortable thought to a heart broken with a sense of the neglect and contempt he meets with among men. Blessed Jesus! may not one congregation be got together, even upon our guilty earth, that shall, in this respect, be like the angels—all lovers of thee? O! why should this be impossible, while they are all so much in need of thee, all so much indebted to thee, and thou art so lovely in thyself? Why, my brethren, should not this congregation be made up of such, and such only as are lovers of Jesus? Why should he not be precious to every one of you, rich and poor, old and young, white and black? What reason can any one of you give, why you in particular should neglect him? I am sure you can give none. And will you, without any reason, dissent from all the angels in heaven, in a point of which they must be the most competent judges? Will you differ from them, and agree in your sentiments of Christ with the spirits of

hell, his implacable, but conquered and miserable enemies ?

If all this has no weight with you, let me ask you further, Will you not agree to that estimate of Jesus which his Father has of him ? Will you run counter to the supreme reason ? Will you set up yourselves as wiser than omniscience ? How must Jehovah resent it to see a worm at his footstool daring to despise him, whom he loves so highly ? Oh, let him be precious to you, because he is so to God, who knows him best.

But I am shocked at my own attempt.—O precious Jesus ! are matters come to that pass in our world, that creatures bought with thy blood, creatures that owe all their hopes to thee, should stand in need of persuasions to love thee ? What horrors attend the thought ! However, blessed be God ! there are some, even among men, to whom he is precious. This world is not entirely peopled with the despisers of Christ. To as many of you as believe, he is precious, though to none else.

Would you know the reason of this ? I will tell you ; none but believers have eyes to see his glory, none but they are sensible of their need of him, and none but they have learned from experience how precious he is.

1. None but believers have eyes to see the glory of Christ. As the knowledge of Christ is entirely from revelation, an avowed unbeliever, who rejects that revelation, can have no right knowledge of him, and therefore must be entirely indifferent towards him, as one unknown, or must despise and abhor him as an enthusiast or impostor. But one, who is not an unbeliever in profession or speculation, may yet be destitute of that faith which constitutes a true believer, and which renders Jesus precious to the soul. Even devils are very orthodox in speculation ! Devils believe and tremble ; and they could cry out, “ What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth ? We know thee, who thou art ; even the Holy One of God,” Mark, i. 24. And there are crowds among us who believe, after a fashion, that Christ is the true Messiah, who yet show by their practices that they neglect him in their hearts, and are not believers in the full import of the character. True faith includes not only a speculative knowledge and belief, but a clear, affecting, realizing view, and a hearty approbation of the things known and believed concerning Jesus Christ ; and such a view, such an approbation, cannot be produced by any human means, but only by the enlightening influence of the Holy

Spirit shining into the heart. Without such a faith as this, the mind is all dark and blind as to the glory of Jesus Christ; it can see no beauty in him, that he should be desired. Honourable and sublime speculations concerning him may hover in the understanding, and the tongue may pronounce many pompous panegyrics in his praise, but the understanding has no realizing affecting views of his excellency; nor does the heart delight in him, and love him as infinitely precious and lovely. The god of this world, the prince of darkness, has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them. But, as to the enlightened believer, God, who first commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This divine illumination pierces the cloud that obscured his understanding, and enables him to view the Lord Jesus in a strong and striking light; a light entirely different from that of the crowd around him; a light in which it is impossible to view this glorious person without loving him.

A believer and an unbeliever may be equally orthodox in speculation, and have the same notions in theory concerning Jesus Christ: and yet it is certainly true, that their views of him are vastly different. Believers, do you think that, if the Christ-despising multitude around you had the same views of his worth and preciousness which you have, they could neglect him as you do? It is impossible. You could once neglect him as others do now; you were no more charmed with his beauty than they. But, O! when you were brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, when the glories of the neglected Saviour broke in upon your astonished minds, then was it possible for you to withhold your love from him? Were not your hearts captivated with delightful violence? You could resist no more. Did not your hearts then as naturally and freely love him with whom they were once disgusted, as ever they loved a dear child or a friend, or the sweetest created enjoyment? The improving your reason into faith is setting the disordered eye of the mind right, that it may be able to see this object; and, when once you viewed it with this eye of reason restored and improved, how did the precious stone sparkle before you, and charm you with its brilliancy and excellence? Christ is one of those things unseen and hoped for, of which Paul says, "Faith is the substance and evidence," Heb. xi. 1. Faith gives Christ a present subsistence in the mind,

not as a majestic phantom, but as the most glorious and important reality ; and this faith is a clear, affecting demonstration, or conviction, of his existence, and of his being in reality what his word represents him. It is by such a faith, that is, under its habitual influence, that the believer lives ; and hence, while he lives, Jesus is still precious to him.

2. None but believers are properly sensible of their need of Christ. They are deeply sensible of their ignorance, and the disorder of their understanding, and therefore they are sensible of their want of both the external and internal instructions of this divine Prophet. But as to others, they are puffed up with intellectual pride, and apprehend themselves in very little need of religious instructions ; and therefore they think but very slightly of him. Believers feel themselves guilty, destitute of all righteousness, and incapable of making atonement for their sins, or recommending themselves to God—and therefore the satisfaction and righteousness of Jesus Christ are most precious to them, and they rejoice in him as their all-prevailing Intercessor. But as to the unbelieving crowd, they have no such mortifying thoughts of themselves : they have so many excuses to make for their sins, that they bring down their guilt to a very trifling thing, hardly worthy of divine resentment ; and they magnify their good works to such a height, that they imagine they will nearly balance the bad, and procure them some favour at least from God, and therefore they must look upon this High Priest as needless. They also love to be free from the restraints of religion, and to have the command of themselves. They would usurp the power of self-government, and make their own pleasure their rule ; and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ, as a King, is so far from being precious, that he is very unacceptable to such obstinate, headstrong rebels. They choose to have no lawgiver but their own wills ; and therefore, they trample upon his laws, and as it were, form insurrections against his government. But the poor believer, sensible of his incapacity for self-government, loves to be under direction, and delights to feel the dependent, submissive, pliant spirit of a subject. He counts it a mercy not to have the management of himself, and feels his need of this mediatorial King to rule him. He hates the rebel within, hates every insurrection of sin, and longs to have it entirely subdued ; and every thought, every motion of his soul, brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ; and therefore, he feels the need of his royal power to make

an entire conquest of his hostile spirit. His commands are not uneasy impositions, but most acceptable and friendly directions to him: and the prohibitions of his law are not painful restraints, but high privileges in his esteem. The language of his heart is, "Precious Jesus! be thou my King. I love to live in humble subjection to thee. I would voluntarily submit myself to thy control and direction. Thy will, not mine, be done! O subdue every rebellious principle within, and make me all resignation and cheerful obedience to thee." To such a soul it is no wonder Jesus should be exceedingly precious: but, O! how different is this spirit from that which generally prevails in the world! Let me add but one reason more why Jesus is precious to believers, and them only; namely,

3. None but believers have known by experience how precious he is. They, and only they, can reflect upon the glorious views of him, which themselves have had, to captivate their hearts for ever to him. They, and only they, have known what it is to feel a bleeding heart healed by his gentle hand and a clamorous conscience pacified by his atoning blood. They, and only they, know by experience, how sweet it is to feel his love shed abroad in their hearts; to feel a heart, ravished with his glory, pant, and long, and breathe after him, and exerting the various acts of faith, desire, joy and hope, towards him. They, and only they, know by experience, how pleasant it is to converse with him in his ordinances, and to spend an hour of devotion in some retirement, as it were, in his company. They, and only they, have experienced the exertions of his royal power, conquering their mightiest sins, and sweetly subduing them to himself. These are, in some measure, matters of experience with every true believer, and therefore it is no wonder Jesus should be precious to them. But, as to the unbelieving multitude, they are entire strangers to these things. They may have some superficial notions of them floating in their heads, but they have never felt them in their hearts; and therefore, the infinitely precious Lord Jesus is a worthless, insignificant being to them: and thus, alas! it will be with such unhappy creatures, until experience becomes their teacher; until they taste for themselves "that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3.

There is an interesting question, which, I doubt not, has risen in the minds of such of you as have attended to what has been said with a particular application to yourselves, and

keeps you in a painful suspense : with an answer to which I shall conclude. " Am I indeed a true believer ? " may some of you say ; " and is Christ precious to me ? My satisfaction in this sweet subject is vastly abated, till this question is solved. Sometimes, I humbly think the evidence is in my favour, and I begin to hope that he is indeed precious to my soul ; but, alas ! my love for him soon languishes, and then my doubts and fears return, and I know not what to do, nor what to think of myself." Do not some of you, my brethren, long to have this perplexing case cleared up ? O, what would you not give if you might return home fully satisfied in this point ? Well, I would willingly help you, for experience has taught me to sympathise with you under this difficulty. O, my heart ! how often hast thou been suspicious of thyself in this respect ! The readiest way I can now take to clear up the matter, is to answer another question, naturally resulting from my subject ; and that is, " How does that high esteem which a believer has for Jesus Christ discover itself ? Or how does he show that Christ is indeed precious to him ? " I answer, he shows it in various ways, particularly by his affectionate thoughts of him which often rise in his mind, and always find welcome there. He discovers that Jesus is precious to him by hating and resisting whatever is displeasing to him, and by parting with every thing that comes in competition with him. He will let all go, rather than part with Christ. Honour, reputation, ease, riches, pleasure, and even life itself, are nothing to him in comparison of Christ ; and he will run the risk of all, nay, will actually lose all, if he may but win Christ. He discovers this high esteem for him by the pleasure he takes in feeling his heart suitably affected towards him, and by his uneasiness when it is otherwise. O ! when he can love Jesus, when his thoughts affectionately clasp around him, and when he has a heart to serve him, then he is happy, his soul is well, and he is lively and cheerful. But alas ! when it is otherwise with him, when his love languishes, when his heart hardens, when it becomes out of order for his service, then he grows uneasy and discontented and cannot be at rest. When Jesus favours him with his gracious presence, and revives him with his influence, how does he rejoice ! but when his beloved withdraws himself, and he is gone, how does he lament his absence, and long for his return ! He weeps and cries like a bereaved deserted orphan, and moans like a loving turtle in the absence of its mate. Because Christ is so precious to him, he cannot bear the

thought of parting with him, and the least jealousy of his love pierces his very heart. Because he loves him, he longs for the full enjoyment of him, and is ravished with the prospect of it. Because Christ is precious to him, his interests are so too; and he longs to see his kingdom flourish, and all men fired with his love. Because he loves him, he loves his ordinances; loves to hear, because it is the word of Jesus; loves to pray, because it is maintaining intercourse with Jesus; loves to sit at his table, because it is a memorial of Jesus; and loves his people, because they love Jesus. Whatever has a relation to his precious Saviour is for that reason precious to him; and, when he feels any thing of a contrary disposition, alas! it grieves him, and makes him abhor himself. These things are sufficient to show that the Lord Jesus has his heart, and is indeed precious to him; and is not this the very picture of some trembling, doubting souls among you? If it be, take courage. After so many vain searches, you have at length discovered the welcome secret, that Christ is indeed precious to you; and if so, you may be sure that you are precious to him, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day that I make up my jewels," Mal. iii. 17. If you are now satisfied, after thorough trial of the case, retain your hope, and let not any discouraging appearance renew your jealousies again; labour to be steady and firm Christians, and do not stagger through unbelief.

But, alas! I fear that many of you know nothing experimentally of the exercises of a believing heart, which I have been describing, and consequently that Christ is not precious to you. If this is the case, you may be sure indeed you are hateful to him. "He is angry with the wicked every day." "Those that honour him he will honour; but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. And what will you do if Christ should become your enemy, and fight against you? If this precious stone should become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to you, over which you will fall into ruin; O how dreadful must the fall be! What must you expect but to lie down in unutterable and everlasting sorrow!

THE END.

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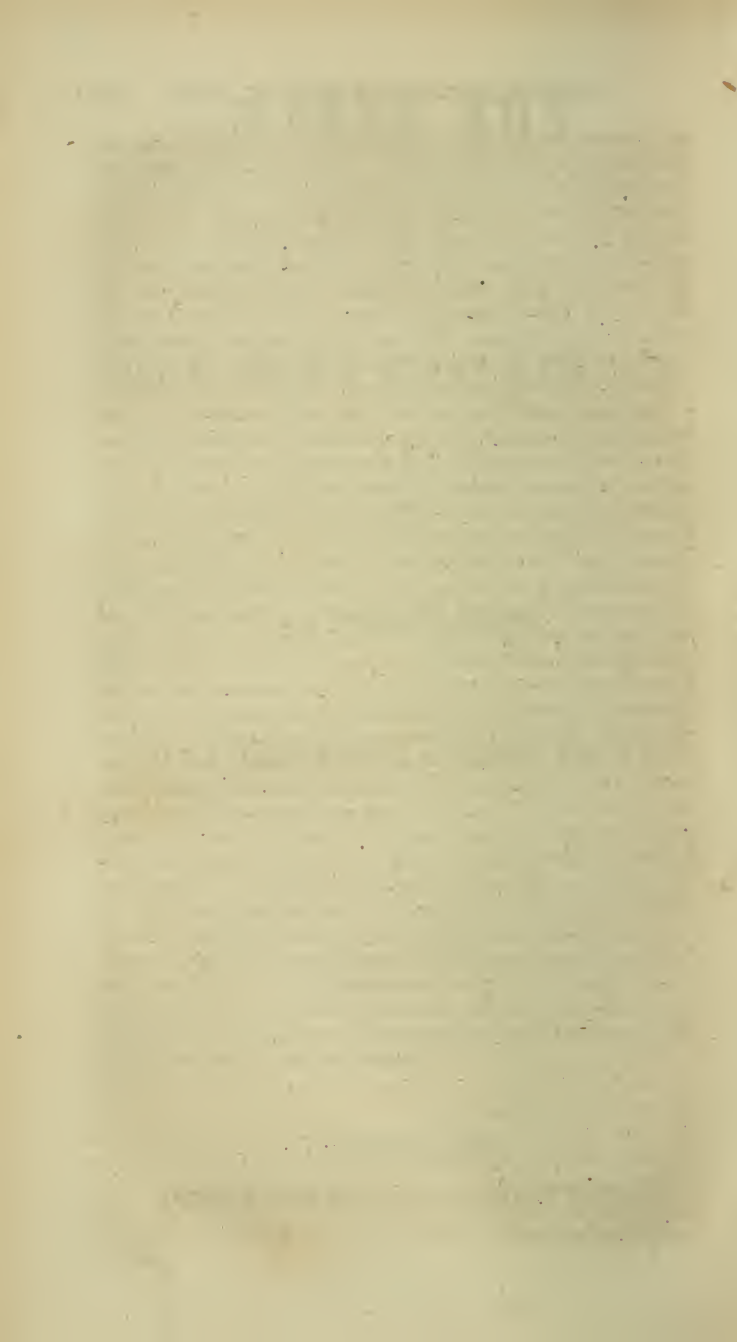
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THE BIBLE,

A REVELATION FROM GOD.

WHOEVER seriously reflects on the powers and capacities of the human mind, regarding them as the work of Him who doeth nothing in vain, and comparing them with those of the inferior creatures, will readily perceive that man alone was created to be RELIGIOUS. Of all the inhabitants of this earth, none else are capable of obtaining any knowledge of their Creator, or of rendering him worship and praise. Man alone possesses the capacity of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, between moral good and evil; and of receiving instruction in social and relative duties, with the obligations under which he lies to perform them, and the advantages of doing it. He alone is capable of being governed by a law, and of being influenced by the proposal of rewards and punishments; of acting as under the eye of an invisible Observer, and with reference to a future season of retribution. From these premises we infer with absolute certainty, that the all-wise Creator thus constituted our minds, and conferred on us these distinguishing endowments, in order to render us capable of Religion, for the purpose of his glory, and of our own felicity in the most intimate connexion with that of our fellow creatures.

When further, we consider what this word Religion implies; and understand it, according to its most general acceptation, to be such an habitual regard to the one, true, living and eternal God, the Creator, Governor, and Judge of all, as influences us to seek his favour, to do his will, and to aim at his glory, in the temper of our hearts, and the regulation of our actions, both in the worship which we render to him, and the duties which we perform to man, for his sake and according to his will; we shall be constrained to allow, that it is most reasonable and excellent.—Doubtless, the exercises of true devotion form the noblest employment of the human mind, which in them emulates the angelic nature. A conscientious regard to

the all-seeing eye of a righteous and omnipotent Judge is the best bond of human society, and regulator of our relative conduct ; insomuch that if this principle of action were universal and complete, human laws and tribunals would be entirely unnecessary. This would likewise most effectually moderate our appetites and passions ; and produce the greatest possible proportion of peace, contentment, and felicity, personal and social, of which our nature, in its present state, is capable. And when we look forwards, beyond the grave, to that immortality and future state of recompense, which reason itself pronounces at least highly probable ; the absolute necessity of religion to our felicity appears evident beyond all dispute.

Hence, we determine with certainty, that religion is that great business, to which all men ought to attend ; and that blessing, after which all men should seek, whatever else be neglected, or superseded, or postponed.

While, however, it is demonstrable, that man is capable of religion, and in duty and interest bound to it by the most indispensable obligations ; stubborn facts, in every age and nation of the world, undeniably prove, that, left to himself, man would never be truly religious. According to the statement above given, where shall we find religion on earth, in any age or nation, which has not possessed, in a greater or less degree, the advantage of those writings, which we will now take for granted to be a divine Revelation, and which will hereafter be shown to be so ? An assemblage of the grossest idolatries in varied forms, and of the wildest absurdities in opinion ; the most vain and irrational superstitions in worship ; and the most dangerous mistakes, as well as the most horrible cruelty, and abandoned licentiousness, in morals ; form that religion, (if it may be dignified by so venerable a name,) which forces itself upon our observation, wherever the light of revelation has not shone. Nor can so much as a single nation, or city, or family, be excepted from this general charge. If there have been a few individuals, who have manifested something not wholly dissimilar from true religion ; and any be disposed to allow, that indeed it was such : it must be far more rational to ascribe it to the remains of original tradition, or even to a personal revelation afforded to them for their own benefit, though not authenticated for the good of others ; than to make it an exception to the general rule, *That without revelation,*

there never was any true religion on earth, since the fall of Adam.

Those indeed, who live under the light of revelation, and make what use they choose of that light, may draw up systems of natural religion, sufficiently plausible, and apparently rational. But it should be remembered, that this light is originally, through one channel or another, derived from the Bible; though too often, with equal absurdity and ingratitude, set up in opposition to its sacred and sublime truths: and universal experience demonstrates, that no such natural religion ever was discovered, and *delineated*, by men of any nation, who had never seen any part of the Bible, or any thing deduced from that source.

However reasonable and excellent many of those truths and precepts are, which are proposed to us as *the oracles of reason*; not one of them ever was proposed by reason without revelation, with such certainty, clearness, and authority, as to become a constant principle and rule of action, in secret and in public, towards God and towards man, to any company of men on earth, perhaps not to one individual.

Indeed, after all the supposed improvements and discoveries of modern times, if we exclude the peculiar instructions of the *Bible*, what darkness and uncertainty rest upon points of the greatest imaginable importance!—Even in respect of the immortality of the soul, when Reason, at her best advantage, has done her utmost, her boasted power of demonstration fails: for even, were the arguments indisputably conclusive, by which the natural immortality of the soul is supported; who knows, or can know without revelation, how it may please a just and holy God to deal with the souls of his offending creatures? “He can create, and he destroy.”—But far greater obscurity and uncertainty rests on those subjects, which relate to the nature of the future world, and the rule of judgment, with which our whole conduct, and our hope and peace, are inseparably connected. It is difficult, if not impossible, to perceive by the light of nature, the consistency of perfect justice with boundless mercy: it still remains dubious, except to those who possess and believe revelation, whether God will punish at all, or pardon at all; or by what rule he intends to punish, or pardon: and indeed, wherever we turn, a thick cloud darkens our view, and discourages our inquiries, if we leave “the sure testimony of God,” and bewilder ourselves in speculations on matters

evidently too high for us.—But how much worse has the case been of almost all the nations of the earth, and generations of men! Indeed so far have they been, from advancing in religious knowledge, where revelation has not been afforded; that they have evidently sunk deeper and deeper into ignorance, and several of them almost into absolute atheism: as if the little glimmering which once shone among them, being the effect of original tradition, was gradually expiring and leaving them in utter darkness.

The most complete information, however, respecting doctrines and duties, would be wholly inadequate to the production of the desired effect; except such information were enforced by sufficient authority, gave necessary encouragement, and proposed effectual assistance. The knowledge of duty and of its reasonableness is utterly unavailing, whilst men are under the dominion of their lusts and passions; as the laws and judicial proceedings of every civilized nation sufficiently manifest. In this case there is no *disposition* to perform the dictates even of conscience or prudence. A heathen could say, *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*. The proposal of virtue as amiable and excellent, by the feeble recommendation of the moralist's pen, is infinitely inferior in energy, to the authoritative command and sanction of the Almighty, denouncing his awful and eternal indignation against the transgressor: and yet facts undeniably show, that men venture upon sin, even with the threatenings of everlasting misery sounding in their ears; nay, with the trembling apprehensions of it dismaying their hearts: for divine as well as human laws "are weak through the flesh," and, with all their sanctions and barriers, are unable to affix boundaries to the swelling tide of human depravity.

Indeed, were men fully acquainted with all the glorious perfections of God; with his holy law, with the nature and malignity of sin, with their own real character and situation as sinners, and with the rule and consequences of the future judgment; and were they, at the same time, left utterly destitute of the encouragements and assistances, which the Gospel proposes, and which form the grand peculiarity of the Bible; their knowledge, so far from rendering them religious, would probably, by leaving them without hope, annihilate all appearances of religion. Wherever any semblance of religion is found, which has no respect at all to the mercy of God, as revealed in the Gospel, through the righteousness, atonement, and media-

tion of Emmanuel, and to the effectual teaching and assistance of the Holy Spirit, it seems to have its foundation, not in men's knowledge, but in their ignorance, of God, of themselves, of his law, and of the evil of sin; and this might easily be evinced to be the case even upon rational principles.

But the proposal of suitable encouragements and assistance is entirely out of the province of reason: these are "heavenly things," (John iii. 12, 13,) of which we can know nothing, except by immediate revelation; and of which we can have no assurance, but the express declaration and faithful promise of God. He alone can inform us, on what terms, or in what manner, his honour permits him, and his sovereign pleasure disposes him, to forgive his offending creatures; and to communicate those gracious influences, which may produce a holy disposition of heart, and enable sinners to overcome all the obstacles, which retard the progress of those who endeavour to lead "a sober, righteous, and godly life."

From such considerations, the necessity of a revelation from God, in order to true religion among men, may be decidedly inferred; and it might reasonably have been expected, that he would afford such a revelation, if he intended to accept of any worship and service from them. Indeed this expectation has been very general in the world. And as counterfeit coin proves the existence of sterling money, and the value which men put on it; so counterfeit revelations, (instead of invalidating the argument,) if they do not *prove* the existence of a real revelation, yet evince that men have felt their need of one, have been sensible that it would be a most valuable acquisition, and have been generally disposed to expect it.

All the counterfeits which hitherto have advanced a claim of being divine revelations, have also been successively exposed, and have sunk into general contempt or neglect: and, in this age and nation, it may be asserted, without hazard of contradiction, that there is but **ONE BOOK** in the world, which so much as appears to be of divine original. This we call, **THE BIBLE**, that is, by way of eminence, **THE BOOK**: and such is the internal and external evidence, which authenticates its claim, that I am persuaded, were men as open to conviction on this subject, as they are in mathematical investigations, they could no more, after due examination, reject it, than they could contradict an evident demonstration.

t may therefore not be improper to insert, in this place, a few of the most obvious reasons, which the more studious Christian is "ready to give of the hope which is in him;" (1 Pet. iii. 15,) and which is grounded upon this first principle, "THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD;" in order to show that it is highly reasonable to believe the Bible to be a divine revelation; and if so, then equally reasonable to take all our measures of truth and duty from it, and to bow our understanding and inclinations to its teaching and governance.

Let it be here carefully observed, that the DIVINE INSPIRATION, and not merely the *authenticity*, or *genuineness*, of each part of the sacred writings, is intended.—Each part, and every part, may be authentic, or genuine; the work of the authors whose names they severally bear; or true and unsophisticated narratives of the times to which they refer: and yet they may be merely *human*, and of no authority in matters of doctrine and duty. The Odes of Horace, and Cæsar's Commentaries, are authentic: probably the first book of Maccabees is genuine history: yet they are not, on that account, in any degree the authoritative guides or standards of our faith and practice.—Many able and admired writers, who apparently have stood forth, as the champions of the Bible, appear to the author of this treatise, to have (he hopes undesignedly) betrayed the cause. An ancient warrior, having murdered his predecessor, and usurped his throne, was some time after requested to permit him to be numbered among the gods; and it is said that he answered, "*Sit divus, modo non sit vivus;*" "Let him be a god, provided he be not living." These apologists for the Bible, seem to reverse the words, and to say, "*Sit vivus, modo non sit divus;*" "Let it be *genuine*, provided it be not *divine*." It would, however, be waste of time, to attempt to prove either the authenticity or the genuineness of the sacred writings; unless in entire subserviency to the demonstration that they are divinely inspired. All the works and words of mere men are *fallible*, and may be erroneous: and the *desideratum*, that which is especially wanted, is an INFALLIBLE STANDARD; to which all other books, and instructions of every kind, may be referred, with which they may be compared, and by which they may be judged. Now, if the sacred writings are indeed "THE WORD OF GOD," if "all scripture is given by inspiration of God," we have this *desideratum*; and have nothing further, in this respect, to ex-

pect or desire. But if the books, called by the apostles "The oracles of God," (Rom. iii. 2. Heb. v. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 11,) are merely the authentic writings of Moses, David, Isaiah, and others in former times, and not the infallible word of God; we are as far off from the *desideratum* above-mentioned as ever. We may indeed learn what these sages of Israel thought, as well as what the sages of China, Egypt, and Greece maintained, concerning God and religion; and we may examine the testimony of each, and bring in our verdict, some in favour of the one, and some of the other: but we are still far from an *infallible standard*; as far, as if the Bible had never been written; whatever value, in other respects, may be attached to such ancient, venerable, and interesting records.

With this view of the subject, gathering strength from year to year, the writer is decided against any compromise; and he ventures to stand forth, as vindicating "*the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.*" He wishes indeed to see far abler champions enter the lists against the Goliath of modern scepticism: but as most of those learned and eminent men, who take up the challenge, seem in some measure to compromise the main point, or to decline the discussion of it; he takes his sling and his stone, and says, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

By "*the divine inspiration of the Scriptures,*" the writer would be understood to mean, "such a complete and immediate communication, by the Holy Spirit, to the minds of the sacred writers, of those things which could not have been otherwise known, and such an effectual superintendency, as to those particulars, concerning which they might otherwise obtain information, as sufficed absolutely to preserve them from every degree of error, in all things, which could in the least affect any of the doctrines or precepts contained in their writings, or mislead any person, who considered them as a divine and infallible standard of truth and duty." Every sentence, in this view, must be considered as "the sure testimony of God," in that sense in which it is proposed as truth. Facts occurred, and words were spoken, as to the import of them, and the instruction contained in them, exactly as they stand here recorded: but the morality of words and actions, recorded merely as spoken and done, must be judged of,

by the doctrinal and preceptive parts of the same book.— On this ground, all difference or disparity between one and another of the sacred writers is wholly excluded: Moses, Samuel, David, and Isaiah; Paul, James, Peter, and John, are all supposed to speak, or write, “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” they are *the voice*, but the divine Spirit is every where the *SPEAKER*. They wrote indeed in such language, as their different talents, educations, habits, and associations suggested, or rendered natural to them: but the Holy Spirit so entirely superintended them, when writing, as to exclude every improper expression, and to guide them to all those which best suited their several subjects: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.” (1 Cor. ii. 13.) Many particulars, which philosophers, orators, or critics, think inaccurate, may consist with this complete inspiration: but every kind and degree of misrepresentation, as springing from personal, popular, or national prejudices or opinions, or as calculated to mislead the humble believer, or to sanction error, must be totally excluded.

It will also appear, in the course of the work, that the few passages, (and there are but few, compared with the whole,) in which errors or interpolations have taken place, through the mistakes of transcribers, form no formidable difficulty, in thus regarding the Holy Scriptures. Nearly all such interpolations and errors may be detected and pointed out, by sober and well-informed critics, in this, as well as in other books: and if a few escape detection, it is because they do not so immediately affect the sense, as to make it evident to the most acute, penetrating, and accurate student, that they deviate from the style and sentiment of the writer, in whose works they are found.

The writer has indeed, to this present time, always decidedly rejected all emendations of the sacred text, which are adduced either on conjecture, or without adequate authority: and even where the authority is respectable, he has chosen to abide by the present text, when there appeared no evident necessity, nor any very cogent reasons, for the contrary: being aware, how far such alterations may, and often do, lead men from the Scriptures; and how directly they tend gradually to substitute another book in the place of the Bible. Yet it is proper to observe, that if all the various readings, for which any respectable

authority can be given, were adopted ; they would not alter either the standard of truth, or the rule of duty, in one material point : but whither *conjectural* emendations might lead, he cannot undertake to prognosticate.

These things having been premised, he proceeds to state some of the leading reasons, which any intelligent man may assign, for believing the Scriptures, as we now have them, to be the infallible word of God.

I. Great numbers of wise and good men, through many generations and in distant countries, have agreed in receiving the Bible as a divine revelation. Many of them have been distinguished and generally approved, for seriousness, erudition, penetration, and impartiality in judging of men and things. With much labour and patient investigation, they detected the impostures, by which their contemporaries were duped : yet the same assiduous examination confirmed them in believing the Bible to be "THE WORD OF GOD;" and induced them, living and dying, to recommend it to all others, as the source of all true wisdom, hope, and consolation. In this view, even "the tradition of the church" has great weight : for, whatever abuse has been made of the term, by such as generally were no part of the true church, yet it must be allowed to be a consideration of vast importance; that the whole company of those, who have "worshipped the living God in spirit and in truth," (including those who ventured and laid down their lives for conscience' sake, and who were the most pious, holy, and useful men in every age,) have unanimously concurred in handing down to us the Scriptures as a divine revelation, and have very little differed about the books, which form that sacred deposit. And I cannot but suppose, that if a being of entire impartiality, of sound mind, and holy disposition, should be shown the two companies, of those who have received, and of those who have rejected the Scriptures ; and should compare the seriousness, learning, patient investigation of truth, solid judgment, holy lives, and composure in a dying hour, without unmanly terror or indecent levity, of the one company, with the character and conduct of the other ; he would be induced to take up the Bible with profound veneration, and the strongest prepossession in its favour.

II. The agreement of the sacred writers among themselves is another cogent argument of their divine inspiration. Should an equal number of contemporaries, of the

same country, education, habits, profession, natural disposition, and rank in life, and associating together as a distinct company, concur in writing a book on religious subjects as large as the Bible, each furnishing his proportion, without comparing notes together; the attentive reader, whose mind had been long inured to such studies, would be able to discover some diversity of opinion among them. But the writers of the Scripture succeeded each other, during the term of fifteen hundred years: some of them were princes or priests, others shepherds or fishermen; their natural abilities, education, habits, and employments, were exceedingly dissimilar; they wrote laws, history, prophecy, odes, devotional exercises, proverbs, parables, doctrines, and controversy; and each man had his distinct department: yet they all exactly coincide in the exhibition which they give us of the perfections, works, truths, and will of God; of the nature, situation, and obligations of man; of sin and salvation; of this world and the next; and in short of all things connected with our duty, safety, interest, and comfort, and in the whole of the religion inculcated by them. They all were evidently of the same judgment, aimed to establish the same principles, and applied them to the same practical purpose. *Apparent* inconsistencies may indeed perplex the superficial reader; but they vanish after a more accurate and persevering investigation: nor could any charge of disagreement, among the sacred writers, ever be substantiated; for it can only be said, that they related the same facts with different circumstances, which are perfectly reconcilable; and that they gave instructions suited to the persons whom they addressed without *systematically* showing the harmony of them with other parts of divine truth. They did not write by concert, and they bestowed no pains to avoid the appearance of inconsistency: yet the exact coincidence, which is perceived among them by the diligent student, is most astonishing, and cannot be accounted for on any rational principles, without admitting that they wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 21.)*

To this we may add, that the scriptural history accords, in a wonderful manner, with the most authentic records which remain, of the events, customs, and manners of the

* Mohammed, to serve present purposes, produced his Koran by a little at a time: this occasioned an evident inconsistency of one part with another; concerning which he only said, that God had a right to change his laws as he saw good.

countries and ages to which it stands related. The rise and fall of empires; the revolutions which have taken place in the world; and the grand outlines of chronology, as mentioned or referred to in the Scriptures, are coincident with those stated by the most approved ancient writers: whilst the palpable errors in these respects, detected in the apocryphal books, constitute one most decisive reason for rejecting them as spurious. But the history of the Bible is of far greater antiquity, than any other records extant in the world: and it is remarkable, that, in numerous instances, it shows the real origin of those absurd fables, which disgrace and obscure all other histories of those remote times; and this is no feeble proof, that it was derived from some surer source of information, than human tradition.

III. The miracles, by which the writers of the Scriptures confirmed their divine mission to their contemporaries, afford us also a most convincing proof in this matter. The narratives of these miracles may be clearly shown to have been published, very soon after the time, and at the places, in which they were said to have been wrought in the most conspicuous manner, and before very great multitudes, enemies as well as friends. This constituted a public challenge to every man, to contradict or disprove them, if he could: yet this public challenge never called forth a single individual to deny that they were really performed; nor was an attempt of the kind ever made till long afterwards.—Can any man of common sense think, that Moses and Aaron could possibly have persuaded the whole nation of Israel, that they had witnessed all the plagues of Egypt, passed through the Red Sea with the waters piled on each side of them, gathered the manna every morning for forty years together, and seen all the wonders recorded in their history, had no such events taken place? If then, that generation could not be thus imposed on, when could the belief of these extraordinary transactions be palmed upon the nation? Surely, it would have been impossible in the next age, to persuade them, that their fathers had seen and experienced such wonderful things, when they had never before heard a single word about them; and when an appeal must have been made to them, that these were things well known among them! What credit could have been obtained to such a forgery at any subsequent period? It would have been absolutely necessary, in making the attempt to persuade the people,

that such traditions had always been current among them; that the memory of them had for ages been perpetuated, by days and ordinances observed in every succeeding age by all the nation; and that their whole civil and religious establishment had thence originated: nay, that the very tenure, on which they held their estates was grounded on it. And could this have possibly been effected, if they all had known, that no such memorials and traditions had ever before been heard of among them? The same might be shown concerning the other miracles recorded in Scripture, especially those of Christ and his apostles; and the sacrament of the Lord's supper in remembrance of his death, and the observance of the Lord's day on the first day of the week, in commemoration of his resurrection, in all ages to this present time. If not instituted at the time, immediately succeeding the events on which they are grounded, at what subsequent period could they have been introduced, so as to persuade multitudes in very many nations, that they and their fathers and fathers' fathers had always observed them? So that it might be made evident, that the man, who denies that the miracles were actually performed, must believe more wonderful things, without any evidence, than those are which he rejects, though established by unanswerable proof. To evince this, as to one most important instance, namely, the resurrection of Christ, which, being once proved, undeniably establishes the divine original and authority of Christianity, let the reader consult the latter part of *John* xx. 24—29.

On this subject, it may again be demanded, When could the belief of the resurrection of Christ, and the miracles wrought by his apostles and disciples in proof of it, have been obtruded on mankind, if they had never happened? Surely not in the age, when they were said to have been witnessed by hundreds of thousands, who were publicly challenged to deny them if they could! Certainly not in any subsequent age; for the origin of Christianity was expressly ascribed to them, and millions must have been persuaded, that they had always believed those things, of which they had never to that time, so much as heard!* We may indeed venture to assert, that no past event was ever so fully proved as our Lord's resurrection; and that

* The Jews, at this day, do not deny, that the miracles recorded in the New Testament history were actually performed, but they absurdly ascribe them all to enchantment.

it would not be half so preposterous to doubt whether such a man as Julius Cæsar ever existed, as it would be to question whether Jesus actually rose from the dead. What then do they mean, who oppose some trivial apparent variations, in the account given of this event by the four Evangelists, (which have repeatedly been shown capable of an easy reconciliation,) to such an unparalleled complication of evidence that it did actually take place?*

IV. The prophecies contained in the sacred Scriptures, and fulfilling to this day, fully demonstrate that they are divinely inspired. These form a species of perpetual miracles, which challenge the investigation of men in every age; and which, though overlooked by the careless and prejudiced, cannot fail of producing conviction proportioned to the humble and reverential attention paid to them. The prophecies of the Messiah, which are found in almost all the books of the Old Testament, when compared with the exact accomplishment of them, as recorded in the authentic writings of the Evangelists, abundantly prove them to have been written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: while the existence of the Jews as a people differing from all others upon the face of the earth, and their regard to these writings, as the sacred oracles handed down from their progenitors, sufficiently vouch for their antiquity: though that admits of full and clear proof of another kind. According to the predictions of these books, Nineveh has been desolated; (Nah. i. ii. iii;) Babylon swept with the besom of destruction; (Isa. xiii. xiv;) Tyre become a place to dry nets in; (Ez. xxvi. 4, 5;) Egypt the basest of the kingdoms, which has never since been able to "exalt itself above the nations." (Ez. xxix, 14, 15.) These, and many other events, fulfilling ancient prophecies, very many ages after they were delivered, can never be accounted for, except by allowing that He, who sees the end from the beginning, thus revealed his secret purposes, that the accomplishment of them might prove the Scriptures to be his word of instruction to mankind.

In like manner, there are evident predictions interwoven with the writings of almost every writer of the New Testament, as a divine attestation to the doctrine contained in them. The destruction of Jerusalem, with all the circumstances predicted in the Evangelists; (the nar-

[* See "The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus," published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication.]

rative of which may be seen in Josephus's History of the Jewish Wars;) the series of ages, during which that city has been "trodden down of the gentiles;" (Luke xxi. 24;) the long continued dispersion of the Jews, and the conversion of the nations to Christianity; the many antichristian corruptions of the gospel; the superstition, uncommanded austerities, idolatry, spiritual tyranny, and persecution, of the Roman hierarchy; the division of the empire into ten kingdoms; the concurrence of those who ruled those kingdoms during many ages, to support the usurpations of the church of Rome; and the existence of Christianity to this day, amidst so many enemies, who have used every possible method to destroy it:—all these occurrences, when diligently compared with the predictions of the New Testament, do not come short of the fullest demonstration, of which the case will admit, that the books which contain those predictions, are the unerring word of God.

There are two further observations, on this subject, which seem of great importance.

1. The predictions of Scripture, if carefully examined, will be found to contain a prophetic history of the world, as to all the grand outlines, from the beginning to this present time; not to speak of such, as are yet unfulfilled. Who can deny; that the history of Abraham's posterity; of Israel especially; of Judah and Joseph, the most renowned sons of Jacob; and of the Jews, in their present dispersions; and their preservation, as a distinct people, "dwelling alone, and not reckoned among the nations," might be clearly and particularly stated in the very words of prophecy? Does not almost the whole of ancient profane history, as distinguished from that contained in the sacred Scriptures; and also a large proportion of modern history, consist principally of the records of the four great empires, the Chaldean, the Medo-persian, the Grecian or Macedonian, and the Roman? And are not these predicted in the book of Daniel so exactly and particularly, as to give some plausibility to the objection, which is demonstrated to be unfounded, that they were written after the event? But especially, "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. xix. 10.) The changes which have taken place in the state of the world, in consequence of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, and of his claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God, which has by some been virulently opposed, by others zealously supported, have been great, extensive, and durable beyond comparison with all other revolutions: but is there one particular, in all the his-

tory of Jesus, and of the subsequent establishment of Christianity, with all the opposition made to it, and the corruptions afterwards introduced, which is not expressly predicted in Scripture? And might not a narrative, in many instances very circumstantial, of our Lord, from his birth to his death, be drawn up in the words of prophecy?

2. From the preceding consideration another arises, as inseparably connected with it. The prophecies of Scripture are not detached or insulated predictions, but constitute a grand system of previous information, as to the secret designs of Providence, extending from the earliest ages even to the consummation of all things; and accompanied by such distinct notations of order, place and time, as may well be called the *geography* and the *chronology* of prophecy. Insomuch that any one, in any age, who well understood the prophecies extant in his day, might have known what to expect, at the specified times, and in the specified countries. As one prediction received its accomplishment, others were given connecting prophecy with history; till the Revelation of John concluded the whole. Events have hitherto, in every age and nation, corresponded with these predictions. This is well known to each individual, in exact proportion to the degree in which he becomes acquainted with Scripture and with historical records, and to the care and impartiality with which he compares the prophecies with those records. As it is the manifest and avowed plan of prophecy, to predict events, occurring in their own place and season to the end of the world; the circumstance of several prophecies being yet unfulfilled, does not in the least deduct from the proof of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, derived from this source: for on such a plan, some must remain unfulfilled, till the end shall come.—It may also be added that, in respect of the state of the Jews, and in many other particulars, there is an evident preparation made for the accomplishment of all the prophecies, which yet remain to be fulfilled. Now, I ask, is there any thing in the least coincident with such a system of prediction, from age to age, in any other book in the world, except the Bible? And could so many and so extraordinary and improbable events, through so many ages and nations, have occurred in so undeniable a manner, as foretold in the Scriptures, had not the Omniscent God himself inspired the Scriptures? The grand outline of prophecy generally takes in all that space of time, which was included between the period when the prophet wrote and the end of the world; and as subordinate predic-

tions, concerning Israel and the nations, and which form a kind of episode to the main design, were fulfilled, other prophecies were delivered from age to age; till John closed the whole, in the Revelation. Can any reasonable man conceive that a design of this kind could ever have entered into the thoughts of an uninspired writer; that he could form the astonishing idea into a regular plan; and that during more than fifteen hundred years, he should have successors, who entered fully into his views, and assisted in carrying them into effect? Or can it be conceived, that such a plan, however formed, could have been so executed, as to have even a plausible appearance of being successful? He, who can believe this, has no right to call those credulous, who receive the Bible as the word of God.

V. The Bible alone, and such books as make it their basis, introduce the infinite God speaking in a manner worthy of himself, with simplicity, majesty, and authority. His character, as there delineated, comprises all possible excellence without any intermixture; his laws and ordinances accord to his perfections; his works and dispensations exhibit them; and all his dealings with his creatures bear the stamp of infinite wisdom, power, justice, purity, truth, goodness and mercy, harmoniously displayed. The description given in the sacred oracles, of the state of the world and of human nature, widely differs from our previous ideas of them; yet facts on full investigation unanswerably prove it to be exactly true. The records of every nation, the events of every age, and the history of every individual must entirely confute the self-flattery of man in this respect, and prove that the writers of the Bible knew the human character immensely better, than any philosopher, ancient or modern, ever did. Their account teaches us what men are actually doing, and what may be expected from them: while all, who form a different estimate of human nature, find their principles inapplicable to facts; their theories incapable of being reduced to practice; and their expectations strangely disappointed. The Bible, well understood, enables us to account for those events, which have appeared inexplicable to men in every age: and the more carefully any one watches and scrutinizes all the motives, imaginations and desires of his own heart, during a length of time; the more manifest will it appear to him, that the Scriptures give a far more just account of his disposition and character, than he himself could have done. In short, man is such a being, and the world is in such a state, as the Scriptures have described: yet multiplied facts,

constant observation, and reiterated experience, are insufficient to convince us of it, till we first learn it from the Bible : and then comparing all which passes within us, and around us, with what we there read, we become more and more acquainted with our own hearts, and established in the belief of the divine original of this most wonderful book. To this we may add, as a most convincing internal proof that the Bible is the word of God, who “knoweth what is in man,” that it is exactly suited to our *real* state, character and wants ; and proposes an adequate remedy, or supply, to all of them ; which in proportion as self-knowledge increases, we see more and more. While others, through ignorance and self-flattery, cannot perceive that its proposals and promises suit their case, the experienced Christian is deeply convinced, that he wants all that is thus proposed and promised, to render him happy, and that he wants nothing more.

The mysteries contained in Scripture rather confirm than invalidate this conclusion : for a book claiming to be a revelation from God and yet devoid of mystery, would, by this very circumstance, confute itself. Incomprehensibility is inseparable from God and from all his works, even the most inconsiderable ; such as, for instance, the growth of a blade of grass. The mysteries of the Scriptures are sublime, interesting and useful ; they display the divine perfections ; lay a foundation for our hope ; and inculcate humility, reverence, love and gratitude. What is incomprehensible must be mysterious : but it may be intelligible as far as it is revealed ; and though it be connected with things above our reason, it may imply nothing contrary to it. So that, in all respects, the contents of the Bible are suited to convince the serious inquirer, that it is “the word of God.”

VI. The *tendency* of the Scripture constitutes another unanswerable proof. Did all men believe and obey the Bible, as a divine revelation, let us seriously inquire, to what tenor of conduct it would lead them, and what would be the effect on society. Surely if repentance, and renunciation of all vice and immorality, when combined with spiritual worship of God in his ordinances ; faith in his mercy and truth, through the mediation of his Son ; and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as visible in the life of every true believer, were universal, or even general, they would form the bulk of mankind to such characters, and would produce such effects as the world has never yet witnessed. Men would then habitually and uniformly do justice, speak truth, show mercy, exercise mutual forgiveness, follow after

peace, bridle their appetites and passions, and lead sober, righteous, and godly lives. Murders, wars, slavery, cruel oppressions, rapine and fraud, and unrestrained licentiousness, would no more desolate the world, or fill it with misery and bitter contentions would no more destroy domestic comfort : but righteousness, goodness, and truth would bless the earth with a felicity exceeding all our present conceptions. This is, no doubt, the direct tendency of the scriptural doctrines, precepts, motives, and promises : nothing is wanting to remedy the state of the world, and to fit men for the worship and felicity of heaven, but to believe and obey the Scriptures. And if many enormous crimes have been committed, under colour of zeal for Christianity, it only proves the depravity of man's heart : for the Scripture, soberly understood, most expressly forbids such practices ; and men do not act in this shameful manner because they duly regard the Bible, but because they will not believe and obey it.

The tendency of these principles is exhibited in the characters delineated in the sacred writings ; while the consistency between the doctrines and precepts of Scripture, and the actions of men recorded in it, implies another argument of its divine original. The conduct of ungodly men, as there related, entirely accords to the abstract account given of human nature : and it appears, that believers conducted themselves exactly in that manner, which the principles of the Bible might have led us to expect. They had naturally like passions with other men ; but these were habitually restrained and regulated by the fear and love of God, and by other holy affections. Their general behaviour was good, but not perfect ; and sometimes their natural proneness to evil broke out, and made way for bitter repentance and deeper humiliation : so that they appear constantly to have perceived their need of forgiveness and divine assistance ; to have expected felicity from the rich mercy of God ; and, instead of making a bad use of that consideration, to have deduced from it motives for gratitude, zeal, patience, meekness, and love to mankind.

But *one character* is exhibited, in the simplest and most unaffected manner, which is perfection itself. Philosophers, orators, and poets, in their several ways, have bestowed immense pains to delineate a faultless character : and they have given us complete models of their own estimate of excellence, and sufficient proof that they had laboured the point to the uttermost of their ability. But the four Evangelists, (whose divine inspiration is now frequently doubted

on the most frivolous pretences,) without seeming to think of it, have done that, in which all other writers have failed. They have set before us a perfect human character, by recording facts, without making any comment on them, or showing the least ingenuity in the arrangement of them. "They have given the history of one, whose spirit, words, and actions were, in every particular, what they ought to have been; who always did the very thing which was proper, and in the best manner imaginable; who never once deviated from the most consummate wisdom, purity, benevolence, compassion, meekness, humility, fortitude, patience, piety, zeal, or any other excellency: and who in no instance let one virtue or holy disposition entrench on another, but exercised them all in entire harmony, and exact proportion."—"This subject challenges investigation, and sets infidelity at defiance. Either these four men exceeded, in genius and capacity, all other writers that ever lived; or they wrote under the guidance of divine inspiration: for, without labour or affectation, they have performed what hath baffled all others, who have set themselves purposely to accomplish it."* This is a fact which cannot be denied: no perfect character is elsewhere delineated, and probably no mere man could have drawn one; and no one would have thought of such a character as that of Jesus. This alone, I apprehend, joined to their entire consistency in this respect with one another, demonstrates that the Evangelists wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It has often been observed, that Satan would never have influenced men to write the Bible; for then he would have been divided against himself: wicked men would not have written a book, which so awfully condemned their whole conduct: and good men would never have ascribed their own inventions to divine inspiration, especially as such forgeries are most severely reprobated in every part of it. But indeed, it is a work as much exceeding every effort of mere man, as the sun surpasses those scanty illuminations, by which his splendour is imitated, or his absence supplied.

VII. The *actual effects*, produced by the Scripture, evince their divine original. These are indeed far from being equal to its *tendency*; because, through human depravity, the gospel is not generally or fully believed and obeyed: yet they are very considerable; and we may assert, that even at present, there are many thousands, who have been reclaimed

* Scott's Answer to Paine's Age of Reason.

from a profane and immoral course of conduct, to sobriety, equity, truth, and piety, and to good behaviour in relative life, simply by attending to the sacred oracles. Having been “made free from sin, and become the servants of God, they have their fruit unto holiness;” and after “patiently continuing in well-doing,” and cheerfully bearing various afflictions, they joyfully meet death, being supported by the hope of eternal life “as the gift of God through Jesus Christ:” while those who best know them, are most convinced, that they have been rendered more wise, holy, and happy, by believing the Bible; and that there is a reality in religion, though various interests and passions may keep them from duly embracing it. What a different nation would ours become, if all its inhabitants were rendered as upright, sincere, peaceable, beneficent, and active in doing good to mankind, as a remnant of them are on scriptural principles? How would the state of the whole earth be changed, if all men every where, thus “denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, and lived soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?” This alone, would do much towards introducing a state of things, resembling that of the millennium. There are indeed enthusiasts; but they become such, by forsaking the *old* rule of faith and duty, for some *new* imagination: and there are hypocrites; but they attest the reality and excellency of religion, by deeming it worth their while to counterfeit it.

VIII. *Brevity* is so connected with *fulness* in the Scriptures that they are a treasure of divine knowledge, which can never be exhausted. The things, that are absolutely necessary to salvation, are few, simple, and obvious to the meanest capacity, provided it be attended by a humble, teachable disposition: but the most learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore: new light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge, to direct his conduct, and illustrate the works of God, and the ways of men; and he will at last leave the world confessing, that the more he studied the Scriptures, the fuller conviction he had of his own ignorance, and of their inestimable value.

IX. Lastly, “he that believeth hath the witness in himself.” The discoveries which he has made by the light of the Scriptures; the experience which he has had, that the Lord fulfils its promises to those who trust in them; the abiding effects produced by attending to it, on his judgment,

dispositions, and affections; and the earnestness of heaven enjoyed by him in communion with God, put the matter beyond all doubt: and though many believers are not at all qualified to dispute against infidels, they are enabled through this inward testimony, to obey the gospel, and to suffer for it: and they can no more be convinced, by reasonings and objections, that uninspired men invented the Bible, than they can be persuaded, that man created the sun, whose light they behold, and by whose beams they are cheered.

And now, if an objector could fully invalidate more than one half of these arguments, (to which many more might easily be added,) the remainder would be abundantly sufficient.—Nay, perhaps, any one of them so far decides the question, that, were there no other proof of the Bible's being the word of God, a man could not reject it, without acting in direct opposition to those dictates of common sense, which direct his conduct in his secular affairs.—But in reality, I have a confidence, that not one of these proofs can be fairly answered; at least it has never yet been done: and the combined force of the whole is so great, that the objections, by which men cavil against the truth, only resemble the foaming waves dashing against the deep rooted rock, which has for ages defied their unavailing fury. But, though these can effect nothing more, they may beat off the poor shipwrecked mariner, who was about to ascend it, in hopes of deliverance from impending destruction.

A very small part of the evidences, which, with combined force, establish the divine original and authority of our holy religion, has here been adduced. Many books have, of late years, been published on the important subject; the writers of which have treated it in different ways: yet, in general, the arguments advanced by each seem separately to be conclusive. It does not appear, that any view of the subject, materially new, remains to be exhibited: but the following particulars have not, as far as the writer has observed, been as yet brought forward, in that prominent manner, and to that advantage, of which they are capable.

I. Many, in these days, allow the sacred writers to have been *wise* and *good men*; but they hesitate, and speak doubtfully, as to their *divine inspiration*. Yet, do not all the prophets, in the Old Testament, speak most decidedly of themselves and of their predecessors, as declaring, not their own words, but the word of God? (2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2. Neh. ix. 30. Ps. xix. 7—11. Isa. viii. 20. Jer. xx. 7—9. xxv. 3, 4. xxvi. 12—19. Ez. i. 1—3. xxxviii. 16, 17. Dan. ix. 12, 13.

Mic. iii. 8—12. Zech. i. 5, 6.) Do not the apostles, and other writers of the New Testament, speak concerning the prophets who wrote the Old Testament, “as holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?” Do they not adopt language, which, in its most obvious meaning, claims the attention of their readers to their own instructions, as to the WORD OF GOD? Do they not thus attest and sanction one another’s writings? Do they thus attest and sanction any other books? The answer to these questions at least effectually confutes the sentiment above stated. If the sacred writers were indeed *wise* men, but *not inspired*; how were they *deluded* into the false imagination, that they and their predecessors and coadjutors were inspired? If they were *good* men, but *not inspired*, would they have thus confidently asserted their own inspiration, and sanctioned that of each other; knowing that this was contrary to the truth, and that they merely delivered their own private sentiments?

II. There are also very many, who so far reverence the name of our Lord Jesus, as to suppose his words to be divine and infallible; and yet they speak of the writers, both of the Old and New Testament, in more hesitating language. Now our Lord himself, in numerous instances, has quoted and referred to the Old Testament, and the several parts of it, as “of divine authority;” and this in a manner which directly tended to mislead the people, if the passages referred and appealed to, were merely the private opinion of some venerable man of former ages, but not the infallible word of God. And his appointment of the apostles, and his giving them the power of the keys, of opening and shutting the kingdom of heaven, must imply, that in their writings, and in those which they sanctioned, his doctrine and religion might be found unmixed and genuine. Indeed, if it cannot be found there, where are we to look for it? These considerations show, that he himself has attested the divine inspiration of both the Old and the New Testament.

An argument, comprising so many and important transactions, cannot be here fully discussed; but a few specimens may not improperly be annexed, of the manner in which the writer supposes that the position might be maintained, with great effect, by any man who had talents and leisure for such an attempt.

When the divine Redeemer was tempted by the devil, he selected all the texts, with which, as “by the sword of the Spirit,” he put the enemy to flight, from one of the books

of Moses. (Matt. iv. 4—11.) Does he then quote these books as the words of man? Surely not. He says repeatedly, "It is written." And had any one inquired, Where? would he not have answered, "In the word of God?"—In his sermon on the mount he continually refers to the law given by Moses; declaring that "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," for he came not "to destroy the law, . . . but to fulfil." Now who can deny that our Lord came to fulfil the types of the ceremonial law, and the requirements of the moral law? And who can imagine, that the Son of God was manifested, thus to honour any institutions of mere human authority? Yet many learned writers speak of the laws of Moses, as if they had originated with him.

The Pharisees and scribes in general maintained, that JEHOVAH spake by Moses, and that his writings were the word of God: but does our Lord ever so much as intimate that this opinion was unwarranted, or held in too absolute and unrestricted a manner? Nay, when he saw good to expose the traditions of the elders, he charges them with rejecting and "making void the commandment of God by their traditions:" but where was that commandment of God to be found, except in the books of Moses? for he expressly referred to the fifth commandment.—Again, when the Pharisees proposed a question to him respecting divorces, he referred them to the Mosaic history of the creation, and to the original institution of marriage; saying, "Have ye never read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female?" Does not this method of appealing to these records imply an express attestation to the indisputable truth of them? And does not that attestation amount to a declaration, that they were written by divine inspiration?

Who was intended by the Householder, that inclosed the vineyard of Israel, but JEHOVAH? By whom did he inclose it, but by Moses? What Moses enacted and performed, was done in the name and by the authority of JEHOVAH: and can his writings be treated as the word of man, by any who consider the testimony of Christ as "the word of God?" (Matt. xxi. 33—46. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xx. 9—18.)

The Sadducees proposed a case to Jesus, which they imagined inconsistent with the resurrection of the dead: but he decisively answered, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God;" and he then referred them to the books of Moses, as a confutation of their error. But did the Son of God in reality appeal to the writings of an

uninspired man? or did he not appeal to "the oracles of God?" This however is not all; for he says expressly, "Have ye not read, that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, &c.?"—What Moses recorded was spoken by God.

On another occasion he inculcated a regard to the Scribes and Pharisees, as sitting in Moses's seat, that is, teaching according to his law; though, at other times, he exposed their instructions, when, following their own traditions, they disannulled that law: what could this mean, but that the one was a divine revelation, the other a mere human invention?

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, (if indeed it be a parable,) our Lord introduces Abraham saying to the rich man concerning his brethren, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them:" and again, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." (Luke xvi. 27—31.) But would he have thus called the attention of his hearers, and of all through revolving ages who read his words, to the writings of Moses, if *any part of them* had been erroneous and the mere opinion of a fallible man?—It is worthy of notice, that our Lord also expressly attested the truth of the Mosaic history, in some particulars which have not been most implicitly credited, in their evident and literal import: I mean the account given by Moses of the universal deluge, and Noah's preservation in the ark, while all else were drowned; and of the destruction of Sodom by fire and brimstone from heaven, with the sudden and awful doom of Lot's wife. (Matt. xxiv. 37—39. Luke xvii. 26—32.)

When discoursing with Nicodemus, he referred to the Mosaic history of the brazen serpent, in such a manner as both attested the typical import of that transaction, and the reality of the miracle recorded by Moses.

On another occasion, probably before the Sanhedrim, our Lord says to the Jews, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Hence we may infer, that an intelligent belief of the words of Moses necessarily leads to faith in Christ; and that it could not be expected, that the Jews, who did not believe the testimony of Moses in this particular, would believe in him of whom he spake. Let this suffice, in respect of the books of Moses.

It may be proper also to adduce a few specimens, respecting the other parts of the Old Testament. When the Pharisees condemned the disciples for rubbing the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day, our Lord said unto them, "Have ye not

read what David did?" "Have ye not read so much as this, what David did?" (Matt. xii. 1—5. Luke vi. 3, 4.) and directly referred also to the law in the same sentence. (Lev. xxiv. 5—9. 1 Sam. xxi. 1—6.) Now this surely authorizes us to conclude, that he regarded both the law and the books of Samuel, as equally "the word of God."—In like manner he called the attention of his hearers to the history of the queen of Sheba, as of undoubted authority; and this is recorded both in the books of the Kings and in the Chronicles. (1 Kings x. 1—13. 2 Chron. ix. 1—12.)

When he anticipated the objection of the Nazarenes, by referring them to the conduct of the Lord in sending Elijah to Zarephath, to a Zidonian woman, rather than to any of the widows in Israel; and in cleansing Naaman the Syrian, by Elisha, rather than any of the lepers in Israel; he not only authenticated the historical records of those facts as *genuine*, but *attested the miracles* recorded in them; which, admitted in their full extent, can never be separated from the divine inspiration of those who wrote them. (Luke iv. 23—27.) It should also be observed, that our Lord never referred to any writings in this manner, except those received by the Jews as the word of God; he opposed oral traditions, and has not once quoted the books of the Apocrypha, some of which were then extant. It may therefore be fairly inferred, that he expressly designed to confirm the opinion of the Jews on that subject, by his repeated attestations, and to establish exclusively the divine inspiration of their sacred books.

JEHOVAH had given commandment by Moses, that the people should offer sacrifices, exclusively at the place which he should appoint: and Joshua, after his death, by divine direction, as the Jews supposed, placed the tabernacle at Shiloh, where it continued till the ark was taken by the Philistines. Afterwards David removed the ark to Jerusalem, and Solomon built the temple on Mount Zion, which was from that time regarded as exclusively the place appointed by God for sacrifice.—A large proportion of the Old Testament, from the books of Moses to the end of it, relates to this tabernacle and temple; to the sins of the people in offering sacrifice elsewhere, or in hypocritically attending on the ordinances there administered; to the judgments of God upon them for these sins; to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans; to the rebuilding of it by Zerubbabel; and to events of a similar nature.—These things are so interwoven with the historical records of the Old Testa-

ment; that to deny the divine authority, by which Joshua separated Shiloh, and David appointed Mount Zion, as the exclusive place for offering sacrifice, according to the command given by Moses, would tend to invalidate the whole narrative; as it would imply, that the Lord inflicted tremendous judgments on the nation, merely for violating the appointments of uninspired men.—The Samaritans indeed argued, that “men ought to worship” on Mount Gèrizim, and not at Jerusalem: but our Lord declared to the woman of Samaria, that the Samaritans “knew not what they worshipped; for salvation was of the Jews.” (John iv. 20—22.) Now, who can doubt, that this declaration of Jesus Christ, and his own constant attendance on the worship performed at Jerusalem, fully attest the divine inspiration of those books, in which the appointment of this place and the building of the temple are recorded, as having been done by the directions and command of God himself?

Let us also very briefly consider our Lord’s testimony to the writings of the Prophets, and to the book of Psalms. The Psalms are indeed ascribed to different writers; but it is evident that they constituted a book of the Scriptures among the Jews at that time, as they now do: (Luke xxiv. 44. Acts i. 20. xiii. 33:) so that a quotation from that book, as the word of God, without adding any limitation, is in fact an attestation of the whole.

When the children in the temple cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David;” the chief priests said to Jesus, “Hearest thou not what these say?” To which he answered, “Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Ps. viii. 2. Matt. xxi. 15, 16.) Did not this attest the words of David, as the language of inspiration, and of prophecy?

On another occasion he demanded of the Pharisees, “how David *in Spirit*,” or, “by the Holy Ghost,” “called the Messiah Lord:” which is equivalent to David’s declaration concerning himself; “The Spirit of God spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” And accordingly our Lord, after his resurrection, declared that “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning him.” (Luke xxiv. 44—46.)—But why *must* this have been, except as the writings referred to were inspired by God himself? Could there be any *necessity*, that the words of fallible men, however wise and good, should be fulfilled, in such extraordinary events, as the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ?

Referring to a passage in the Psalms, (Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6, 7,) he asks, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came; and the Scripture cannot be broken, &c." Who called the magistrates gods, but JEHOVAH? And why could not the Scripture be broken, but because it is "the word of God?"

I shall only, in a general way, refer the reader, to some of our Lord's attestations to several of the Prophets, whose writings form a part of our Scriptures. The texts referred to are surely a sufficient attestation to the prophëcy of Isaiah. (Matt. xiii. 13—15. xv. 7—9. xxi. 13. Mark vii. 6, 7. Luke iv. 17—21.) When our Lord says, "Well did Esaias prophesy of you;" could he mean any thing less than Paul did, in saying, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet?" (Acts xxviii. 25.)—Christ gives similar attestations to the prophëcy of Daniel: (Matt. xxiv. 15. Mark xiii. 14,) and to Hosea. (Hos. vi. 6. Matt. ix. 13. xii. 7.) He also expressly attests the history contained in the book of Jonah, which is often treated very irreverently. (Matt. xii. 39—41. xvi. 4. Luke xi. 29—32.) He evidently refers to the words of Micah, in predicting the persecutions, to which his disciples would be subjected. (Mic. vii. 6. Matt. x. 35, 36.) And he explicitly attests the prophëcy of Malachi. (Mal. iii. 1. Matt. xi. 10, &c. Luke vii. 27. Mal. iv. 5, 6. Matt. xvii. 10—12. Mark ix. 11—13.) Several others of the prophets are quoted by the evangelists: but none are here adduced, except those who are mentioned by our Lord himself, in a manner attesting the divine inspiration of the writers, or their language, as "the word of God."

It only remains to mention his attestation to the Scriptures in general, and to the division of them which was received at that time, into "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms." Thus he says to the Scribes, "Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner?" (Ps. cxviii. 22, 23. Matt. xxi. 42, 43.) And when he adds, "*Therefore* I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;" he evidently shows, that he quoted the passage as the word of God, which "cannot be broken."—"How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" and again, "All this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." (Matt. xxvi. 54—56.)

Would we know more particularly what Scriptures he meant? Let us hear his words to the apostles: "All things

must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me." (Luke xxiv. 27, 44—46.)

The words of our Lord are very remarkable; "Search," says he, "the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." (John v. 39, 40.) Now what could the Jews suppose Jesus to mean by "the Scriptures," but the books which they had been accustomed to distinguish by that appellation? They had thought, that in these the way of eternal life was to be found; these testified of Jesus as the Messiah; and yet they rejected him, without whom they could not obtain eternal life!—This one testimony confirms indubitably the divine revelation of the whole Old Testament, as it stood at that time, to all who truly believe the words of Christ: but, reversing his conclusion in another case, we may fairly say to men who call themselves Christians, "If ye believe not his words, how can ye believe the writings of the Old Testament?"

When the Jews went about to stone him, because he had said, "I and my Father are One;" he quoted a passage from the Psalms, adding, "The Scripture cannot be broken." (John x. 34, 35.) But what can we understand by "the Scripture," in this connexion, but the canonical books of the Old Testament as then received by the Jews? And who can deny this to be a complete authentication of them, as the unfailing word of the unchangeable God? Indeed all those passages, in which Christ speaks of his sufferings, death, and resurrection, with the various circumstances connected with them, as what "must be," with reference to the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, prove, as far as men regard his testimony, that not one tittle of those sacred records could pass away, till the whole had received its full accomplishment: for which no other satisfactory reason can possibly be given, than this, that the whole is a divine revelation; "for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

But, should it be granted that our Lord's own words demonstrate the whole Old Testament to be "given by inspiration from God," as far as men reverence and believe his testimony; yet it may still be asked, does it follow, that the books of the New Testament admit of the same kind of proof from the words of Christ himself?—Let us briefly examine this subject also. It is not indeed practicable to adduce so large a body of evidence, as has been brought in

the former case ; nor is it necessary : yet I apprehend that the argument may in a short compass be made very conclusive.—When Peter confessed Jesus to be “ the Christ, the Son of the living God,” he answered, “ I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”—Peter had spoken in the name of the other apostles, as well as in his own ; and it is generally allowed, that the answer included them also : indeed this appears by other passages of similar import, in which they were all addressed.

If it be allowed, that this absolute promise was given exclusively to the apostles ; we must next inquire, how they could exercise this power of binding or loosing, especially after their decease, except by their doctrine ? And where must the church or the world look for that doctrine, if not in their writings ? Should we suppose, that the exercise of this exclusive authority was confined to the short time of their continuance on earth ; then the church has ever since been left destitute of any rule, either for censures or absolutions, even of a declarative nature ; and also of all *criteria* for the discrimination of true Christians from other men, either for the purpose of self-examination, or for the regulation of our conduct “ towards the household of faith,” and the world around us. But if this promise was not exclusively made to the apostles, nor the authority given by it intended to be exercised according to their doctrine ; the consequence must be, either that there are in every age, ministers of religion possessed of this absolute power of binding and loosing ; or that the words of Christ have not received their accomplishment. And, as it does not seem to accord with the prevailing sentiments of this age, to invest ministers, of any kind or description, with such an infallible and decisive authority ; we may, I apprehend, be allowed to conclude, that the promise was made exclusively to the apostles ; and was fulfilled, when they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to deliver that doctrine to the church, according to which the state of all men, in respect of acceptance or condemnation, is and will be finally decided. If this be allowed, it will *inevitably* follow, that our Lord’s express testimony proves that their writings are *a divine revelation* ; for in them especially they delivered to the church what they received from the Lord ; and these have been, and will be to all subsequent generations, exclusively “ the doctrine of Christ.”

On the night before his crucifixion, our blessed Saviour repeatedly promised to send to his apostles, "the Spirit of truth, who should guide them into all truth," and "show them things to come;" who should "teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them," and who "should receive of his and show it to them." There is a subordinate sense, in which these promises are, in a measure, accomplished to all true Christians: but the persons, who advance doubts respecting the divine authority of the books contained in the New Testament, will scarcely deny that they are addressed in a far superior sense, to the apostles and those immediately connected with them. Now the Spirit was given to them, as well as to others, "to profit withal:" and it is undeniable, that genuine Christianity, without unremitted miracles, could be delivered down to future ages for the profit of mankind, only by writings, in which it should be stated without error or corrupt mixture, and preserved as a sacred deposit in the church from generation to generation. What then could the Holy Spirit, promised in this energetic language to the apostles, be so rationally supposed to do for them, as to guide their minds by an immediate superintending inspiration, when they dictated those writings, by which it was evidently the design of Providence that the doctrine of Christ should be perpetuated in the church? Indeed, either they did deliver to mankind the doctrine of their Lord and Master, pure and uncorrupted, or they did not: if they did not, the revelation, which God made of himself by his well-beloved Son, has answered very little purpose; as no man, without a new revelation properly so called, can or ever could distinguish the truths of Christ from the errors of the apostles: but if they did deliver their doctrine pure and uncorrupted to mankind, why should we maintain, that they were preserved from error when preaching the gospel, in which one generation of men alone was immediately concerned; and yet left to fall into errors in their writings, in which all future ages and nations were most deeply interested? If when they were brought before governors for a testimony to them, it was not they that spoke, but the Holy Spirit who spake by them; we may surely conclude, that what they wrote for a testimony to all future ages and nations, was arranged under the same efficacious teaching and superintendency.

Our Lord, just before his ascension, renewed and ratified his commission to the apostles: "All power," says he,

“is given unto me in heaven and earth: go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world.” “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Yet none, those alone excepted, to whom the apostles personally preached, can have any concern in this important declaration; unless the doctrine of Christ, delivered to the apostles, may be *certainly* found in their writings.—Our Lord just before his crucifixion intercedes for his whole future church in these words, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me *through their word* :” and indeed all real Christians in every age have believed in him, not so much through the word of the ministers who preached to them, as through that of the apostles, by which their doctrine must be tried; from which, if sound, it is deduced, and to which it is properly their custom to make an unreserved appeal. In this sense Paul says, that believers are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief Corner Stone :” for the Old Testament written by the prophets, and the New Testament by the apostles, under “the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,” contain that doctrine, which is the foundation of the faith and hope of the whole church, as resting on Christ, and united in him into an holy temple, “an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

The several books of the New Testament were written by the apostles themselves, excepting the gospels of Mark and Luke, and the Acts of the Apostles: and these were penned by the attendants on the apostles, and under their immediate inspection, and consequently were equally authenticated by them, as if they had themselves written them. If any should object, that Paul was not one of those apostles, to whom Christ gave his express testimony, and yet he wrote a great part of the Epistles, it may be answered, first, that there is no alternative between denying all the facts recorded concerning him, and allowing his apostolical authority in its fullest extent, or that at least “he was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles :” and secondly, that Peter has attested his Epistles to be a part of the Scriptures, in these remarkable words, “Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom

given unto him, hath written unto you ; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other Scriptures*, unto their own destruction." If therefore, our Lord's own words authenticate the writings of the other apostles as a divine revelation ; Peter, who in some respects might be called the chief of the apostles, authenticates by divine inspiration the writings of his beloved brother Paul.

Finally, the only portion of Scripture, of which our Lord can in any sense be called the writer, is that which contains the epistles to the seven churches in Asia, which he dictated to the apostle John as his amanuensis. All his *discourses* (as well as his miracles, and the events of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension,) were written, not by himself, but by the evangelists, two of whom were not apostles. What greater assurance then have we, that they recorded faithfully his words, than that the apostles faithfully delivered his doctrine to mankind ? If the evangelists were not inspired in recording his words, we are not infallibly sure, that he spoke what they ascribe to him : and why should we allow the divine inspiration of his historians, in recording his words ; and yet doubt the divine inspiration of his apostles, in communicating his doctrine to the church and to the world ? This opinion therefore is, in fact, both hostile to the whole of the sacred oracles, and at variance with itself.

The consequences of our present conduct, according to the Scriptures, are so immense, that if there were only a bare possibility that these were divine truth, it would be madness to run the risk of rejecting them, for the sake of gaining the whole world. What then shall we think of those who having such unanswerable demonstrations of their being the word of God, that they cannot reasonably doubt of it for a moment, yet disobey the commands, and neglect the salvation, revealed in them, for the veriest trifle which can be proposed ? Especially, as it may be shown, that, (besides the eternal consequences,) the firm belief of the Scriptures, and the conscientious obedience which true faith always produces, will render a man far happier in this present life, even amidst trials and self-denying services, than any other man can be made, by all the pomp, pleasure, wealth, power, and honour, which the world can bestow on him.

If these arguments, which certainly contain a complete moral demonstration of the divine inspiration of the Holy

Scriptures, excite in any reader a greater attention to the sacred volume, and dispose him to read it with more strict impartiality, and larger expectations of improvement; if they induce any one, who has not hitherto turned his attention to the subject, to examine it carefully for himself; if they obviate the unhappy prejudices, or confirm the wavering faith, of one individual; if they stir up any one to seek and wait for "the witness in himself;" the writer's object will be thus far obtained.



We must next proceed to consider the nature of a divine revelation, and the reception to which it is entitled.—Knowledge, in different degrees, may be acquired by us in various ways. We know some things by intuition, or the testimony of our senses; and other things by demonstration, or undeniably conclusive arguments. Many things, which do not admit of this kind of proof, may be shown to be *probable*, in so great a degree that it would be absurd to doubt of them, and madness not to regulate our conduct according to them. A very small proportion of men's actions are directed by intuitive knowledge, by demonstration, or even by the higher degrees of probability. A moderate degree of probability is generally sufficient to excite them to activity, and to direct their conduct. TESTIMONY, especially, influences by far the greatest part of human actions; and forms the main-spring of men's vigorous, self-denying exertions, their daring attempts, and their persevering labours. By crediting the assertions, and relying on the engagements, express or implied, of one another, all the grand concerns of nations are conducted; causes, in which life and death are involved, receive their final determination; and commerce, in all its branches, is directed and influenced; and the same regard to testimony, and confidence in our fellow-creatures, is inseparable from the most ordinary affairs of human life.

Now, "if the testimony of man be great, the testimony of God is greater," infinitely greater. Indeed his testimony, when fully ascertained, is the highest possible degree of demonstration: and when the Bible is proved by adequate evidence, to be "the testimony of God," the information contained in it is *sure*, far beyond all other information from whatever quarter or in whatever manner it is obtained.—The judge and the jury in court, the merchant on the ex-

change, the commander of a fleet or army, the minister of state in council, (not to mention cases of subordinate importance,) are fully aware, that no testimony or information can be useful to direct their conduct, in their respective concerns, except it be *credited*. To appreciate its credibility and its import, is the first consideration; and the next, when it is believed and understood, should be to form the plan of conduct according to it. Thus almost all human actions, and those especially of the greatest importance, are performed and regulated by *faith*, by that same principle, which is the main-spring of human activity, in the great concerns of religion: with this sole difference, that belief of human testimony, and reliance on human faithfulness to promises and engagements, by word or on paper, and in very many cases, as in that of physicians, lawyers, and even those who prepare our food, by what is regarded as a *professional* engagement, influence men in their secular concerns; the belief of God's testimony, and reliance on his faithfulness to his promises, as written in the Scriptures, influence Christians in their spiritual and eternal concerns.—These things are obvious: but they are seldom duly considered in this connexion.

The Bible is the "testimony of God" to truths and facts, many of which are not otherwise discoverable; or not with sufficient clearness and certainty, to become principles of our habitual conduct. Things past, future, and invisible; truths most important, sublime, and mysterious, are thus brought to our knowledge, attested by him, who cannot mistake, who cannot deceive. But *faith* is the only exercise of our rational faculties, the only operation of the human mind, by which we can avail ourselves of this information. Faith, receiving and appropriating the testimony of God, is to reason, not unlike what the telescope is to the eye of the astronomer, who by it discerns objects invisible to all others; and sees, clearly and distinctly, those things, which to others appear obscure and confused. Reason, thus appropriating, by faith, the information communicated by revelation from the "only wise God," adds immensely to her former scanty stock of knowledge; possessing at the same time *certainty* instead of *conjecture*: and thus, in the posture of an humble disciple, she receives that instruction, which must be for ever withheld from her, while she proudly affects to be the teacher. Thus, even the most illiterate of mankind, believing and becoming more and more acquainted with the sacred oracles, acquire a knowledge in the things

of God and religion, far more certain and useful, than ever was possessed by the wisest and most learned unbeliever : in the same manner as the bosom friend or confidential counsellor of the prince, who is informed of his real purposes and designs, exceeds in practical knowledge of state affairs the most sagacious speculating politician, who merely supposes that those things have been done, or will be done, which he thinks ought to be done, or in some way conjectures to be most probable.

When, relying on the veracity of God, we receive the Scriptures, as in every proposition infallibly true, the whole of the instruction contained in them becomes our own : and we may consider them as a mine of precious ore, which will more and more enrich us, in proportion to our diligence in exploring them, and, so to speak, in working the mine.

But this faith differs widely from the mere assent of the understanding to any proposition, without respect to its importance, and to our own concern in it. Noah, for instance, was informed, that the deluge would come ; and we are informed that it actually came : but he was immediately interested in the event ; we are not. We may therefore assent to the truth of it, as an historical fact, without being influenced by it in our habitual conduct ; but if he truly believed the divine testimony and monition, this belief must necessarily influence his conduct. "By faith, Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark." The truths of revelation, (wholly unlike the reports of the day, which, whether true or false, are of little consequence to us,) all relate to our eternal interests ; and therefore have an inseparable connexion with our practice. The Bible, received in true faith, becomes the foundation of our hope, the standard of our judgment, the source of our comfort, "the lantern of our feet, and the light of our paths," and implicit faith always produces unreserved obedience.

The province of reason therefore, in respect to revelation, is, first to examine and decide, (with modesty and caution,) on the evidences by which it is supported ; to understand and explain the language in which it is conveyed ; to discern, in many things, the excellency of the things revealed to us ; and to use them as motives, encouragements, and rules of obedience : and, in things evidently mysterious, to bow in humble submission to the divine teaching ; to receive in adoring faith and love what we cannot comprehend ; to rest satisfied with what is revealed ; and to leave secret things with God to whom they belong.—Should any

one indeed presume to interpret a text of Scripture, in a sense which contradicts the testimony of our senses or clear demonstration, we may venture to reject his interpretation: for nothing can possibly prove that to be true, which we *certainly know* to be false. But when the doctrines of revelation, or the obvious interpretations of them, according to the common use of language, are only mysterious, but involve no real contradiction; when they are merely above our comprehension, or contrary to the general notions, and preconceptions, or ordinary reasonings, of mankind; but are not opposite to the testimony of our senses, or to any *demonstrated* truth; to reject, on such grounds, the testimony of God, must be *irrational* in the highest degree; unless man be indeed wiser than his Creator.

Seeing therefore, that the Bible may be unanswerably proved to be the word of God, we should reason from it, as from self-evident principles, or demonstrated truths: for "his testimony is sure, making wise the simple."

Many parts of Scripture accord so well with the conclusions of our rational powers, when duly exercised, that either they might have been known without revelation, or else men have mistaken the capacity of *perceiving* truth, for that of *discovering* it. Hence various controversies have arisen about *natural religion*, which many suppose to be rather taken for granted by revelation, than made known by it. But the term is ambiguous: for the word *natural* includes *the propensities of our hearts*, as well as *the powers of our understandings*; and the same truths, which accord to the latter, are often totally opposite to the former. The gentiles might have known many things concerning God and his will, if they had "liked to retain him in their knowledge;" but their alienation of heart from him prevailed to keep them in ignorance, or entangle them in error. So that the term, "the religion of reason," would express the idea much more intelligibly, if any such distinction be deemed necessary.

This however is obvious, that many truths and precepts, which are found in the Bible, have been maintained by persons who were ignorant of that divine revelation, or who did not choose to own their obligations to it: and many others, professing to receive the Scriptures as the word of God, assent to some truths contained in them, not so much because they are revealed, as because they think that they may be proved by other arguments; while they reject, neglect, or explain away those doctrines, which are not thus

evident to their reason, or level with their capacities. So that at last it comes to this, that they discard all which is deemed peculiar to revelation; and refuse to believe "the testimony of God," if their own reason will not vouch for the truth of what he says.

It may indeed be questioned, whether those opinions, which men so confidently magnify as "the oracles of reason," were not originally, without exception, borrowed from revelation, as far as there is any truth in them: and it is evident, that they cannot possess sufficient certainty, clearness, and authority, to render them efficacious principles of action, except as enforced by revelation and its awful sanctions. And the wildest enthusiast never dreamed of a grosser absurdity, than those persons maintain, who suppose that the only wise God has given a revelation to man, confirmed by miracles and prophecies, and established in the world by the labours and sufferings of his servants, and by the crucifixion of his well-beloved Son; and that this revelation at last is found to contain nothing, but what we might have known as well without it: nay, that it is expressed in such language, as has given occasion to those, who have most implicitly believed and reverentially obeyed it, to maintain sentiments and adopt practices, erroneous and evil in themselves, and of fatal consequence to mankind!

We might therefore have previously expected, that the revelation from God should illustrate, confirm, and enforce such things, as seem more level to our natural powers: and that it should make known to us many important matters, which we could not have otherwise discovered, and which would be found exceedingly different from all our notions and imaginations; seeing that our contracted views and limited capacities are infinitely distant from the omniscience of God. So that it is most reasonable to conclude, that the doctrinal truths, which more immediately relate to the divine nature, perfections, providence, and government, to the invisible and eternal world and the mysteries of redemption, constitute by far the most important part of revelation; as discovering to us such things, "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into the heart of man;" and yet they are essentially connected with our present hope, worship, and duty, and with our future happiness or misery.

He therefore cannot, according to the common use of language, be called a believer, who only holds those doctrines, which he deems the dictates of reason as well as of

revelation ; whilst he rejects the testimony of God, whenever he *deems it unreasonable*. And we may hence learn what judgment we ought to form of those, who affirm, without hesitation, that the moral precepts with the annexed penal sanctions, and the more evident truths of the Bible, are the only important part of it ; that it is of little consequence what men believe, especially concerning those things which are in any degree mysterious ; and that none but narrow-minded bigots, and weak and ignorant people, lay any stress upon speculative opinions.—“ He that believeth not, maketh God a liar ;” especially “ he that believeth not the testimony, which God hath given of his Son,” and of eternal life bestowed on sinners through him. This is the uniform doctrine of Scripture ; and to contradict it is equivalent to a total rejection of divine revelation. Can it be supposed, that the prophets and apostles were commissioned, and that the Son of God was “ manifested in the flesh,” died on the cross and rose from the dead, merely to inform mankind, that the Lord approved honesty, temperance, truth, and kindness ; and disapproved the contrary vices ? Or, that the unnumbered testimonies which the Scriptures contain to the mysteries of the Divine Nature, the Person of the Redeemer, the work of Redemption, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, may, without any criminality, be disbelieved, derided or reviled ; provided men are moral in their conduct towards one another ? Or, that God is equally pleased with those who thus affront his veracity, as with those who implicitly submit to his teaching and credit his testimony ? If this be the case, in what does the difference between the infidel and the believer consist ? All, except avowed atheists, will allow the propriety of many precepts, and the truth of some doctrines, coinciding with those contained in Scripture : but the infidel admits them as the dictates of reason, not as “ the testimony of God ;” and many professed believers reject all without hesitation, that does not appear to accord to the same standard. So that both of them believe their own reasonings, “ lean to their own understandings,” and “ make God a liar,” when his testimony contradicts their self-confident decisions ! The prevailing notion therefore, of the comparatively small importance of doctrinal truth, is subversive of revelation ; and in fact is only a more plausible and more dangerous species of infidelity. The decided belief of “ the sure testimony of God,” on the most important doctrines of revelation, and those most intimately connected with our eternal salvation,

our rejoicing hope, and our adoring gratitude; is often, under the word *speculative* or *speculation*, confounded with the boldest investigation of things unrevealed, by the most presumptuous efforts and conclusions of reasoning unbelievers: and this sometimes by pious men, whose excessive antipathy to controversy will not allow them to admit the difference, or come near enough to perceive it.

If we believe the Scriptures to have been written by "inspiration from God," and have any suitable apprehensions of his omniscience, veracity, and perfections; we must be convinced, that it is the height of arrogance for us, short-sighted, erring creatures of yesterday, to speak of any doctrine contained in them as false or doubtful, because it is not coincident with our reasonings or conceptions. Surely, a small portion of modesty and humility might suffice to induce a confession, that *we* are more likely to be mistaken, than that the only wise God should attest what is not exactly true! In rejecting his authenticated testimony, we must either advance our knowledge above his omniscience, or impeach his veracity, or deny the Scriptures, altogether or in part, to be his word; reserving to ourselves the determination, what part is of divine authority, and what is not! If, on the other hand, we deem any part of the Scriptures, though true, to be of little or no importance, or of dangerous tendency; what do we, but affront the infinite wisdom or goodness of God, as if he did not know what truths were proper to be revealed to man; or as if he purposely discovered those matters, which it would have been better for mankind never to have known? And, seeing it is evident that the Lord has, in the Scriptures, required the belief of certain doctrines, as absolutely necessary to salvation; to insinuate that these doctrines are either false, doubtful, or of no value, must involve in it the grossest and most affronting blasphemy imaginable.

We do not indeed maintain, that all the truths of revelation are of equal importance; because they are not stated in Scripture to be so: but none can be wholly unimportant, and we are not always competent to decide upon their comparative value. Some things are more obvious than others; and such as are more hard to be understood, are not so well adapted to those persons, "who are unstable and unlearned" in the school of Christ: yet we are not authorized to reject, or even to doubt, any of them. We may indeed demur as to the true interpretation of them, whilst, in humble, reverent teachableness and prayer, we wait for clearer light

upon the subject: and we must remain for some time in partial ignorance or error, because we cannot at once become acquainted with all the truths which are revealed, even when we possess a disposition implicitly to believe them. There are some things, which relate to the very life and essence of true religion; and others are rather necessary to our stability, comfort, and holy conduct: these we must by no means reject, or treat with indifference; but it is possible, even that the teachable and diligent Christian may to the last be mistaken or ignorant about some of them, and yet be found among "the heirs of salvation:" nay, there is ground to conclude, that this is indeed the case with great numbers, in one way or other.

The importance of revealed truth may be shown in another way; for it is the seed or principle in the soul, whence all inward or real holiness proceeds. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "Beholding as in a glass," (namely in the person, redemption, and doctrine of Christ,) "the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image." "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." This doctrine was, in the judgment of the apostle, "the *great mystery of godliness;*" and indeed all the holy dispositions and affections towards God, all the genuine spiritual worship, all the willing obedience of filial love, and all the cheerful acquiescence in the divine will, and affiance on the divine truth and mercy, which have been found in the world since the fall of man, have arisen from a proper reception of this great truth, and the doctrines connected with it. Spirituality, which consists in a supreme valuation of the holy excellence of spiritual things, and a disposition to seek pleasure and satisfaction in religion, is intimately connected with a believing dependence on the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. And that view of the worth of the soul, the evil of sin, the justice and mercy of God, the vanity of the world, and the believer's obligations to a Saviour, "who loved him, and redeemed him to God with his blood," which the doctrine of the cross communicates, is fundamental to deep repentance, genuine humility, gratitude, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies, and other parts of the Christian temper and character. Without this, a proud morality, and a pharisaical task and form of godliness, will comprise the sum total of man's religion; except as he is brought under those impressions and that guidance, which

will in due time influence him to embrace "the truth as it is in Jesus;" or as he is carried away, into the mazes of anti-scriptural enthusiasm and delusion.

The Holy Scriptures should likewise be considered as a *complete* revelation: so that nothing needs be known, believed, or practised, as essential to religion, except what may be plainly proved from them. On the other hand, it should be carefully observed, that the *whole* word of God is our rule; and that all preference of one part to another, (except as some parts are more immediately connected with our faith and practice, than others,) derogates from the credit of the whole; and implies a latent and indulged doubt, whether the Bible be altogether of divine authority; and whether only that part of it be so, which coincides with the favourite tenets of the person concerned.—True and intelligent faith receives the whole "testimony of God;" gives every part its proper place and measure of attention, and applies it to its proper use: for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

But all unwritten tradition, and apocryphal additions to the word of God, must be decidedly rejected. *Tradition* is so uncertain a way of conveying the knowledge either of truths or facts, that no dependence whatever can be placed on it; so that it is highly improbable, that, without written revelation, any one thing revealed to the prophets and apostles, would have been transmitted to us uncorrupted. Indeed there is some probability in the opinion, that the art of writing was first communicated by revelation, to Moses, in order to perpetuate, with certainty, those facts, truths, and laws, which he was employed to deliver to Israel. Learned men find no traces of *literary* or alphabetical writing, in the history of the nations, till long after the days of Moses; unless the book of Job be regarded as an exception. The art of expressing almost an infinite variety of sounds, by the interchanges of a few letters or marks, seems more like a discovery made to man from heaven, than a human invention; and its beneficial effects, and almost absolute necessity, for the preservation and communication of true religion, favour the conjecture.

But however that may be decided, all who love the Bible, will be thankful to God for this most important advantage; and also for the invention of printing, by which copies of

the Scriptures are rendered cheap and plentiful, beyond all calculation, or comparison with the state of things, before printing was discovered. This gives modern Christians advantages for disseminating the knowledge of divine truth among the nations, in some respects even beyond what the apostles themselves possessed : and how noble and Christian is that grand design, which has lately been grounded on this circumstance by "The British and Foreign Bible Society," which is no less, than that of causing prophets and apostles to speak to the inhabitants of every country on earth, to each in their own language. May God accomplish to its full extent this grand, pious, and beneficent purpose !

We do not need any apocryphal additions to the Scripture. Considered as *human writings*, the apocryphal books have their use : but if *custom* sanction any of them being bound up in the same volume with the sacred oracles, *truth* requires that we explicitly declare, that they are not **THE WORD OF GOD**. Should it be inquired, how we may distinguish between the genuine books of Scripture, and those which are apocryphal ; we answer, that not only some, but all the books, contained in our authorized version of the Scriptures, have many or all of those evidences of a divine original, which have been insisted on : but there is not one, of those called the *Apocrypha*, which may not be proved destitute of such evidence ; and most of them contain internal proof that they are spurious.

THE END.

7
CONVERSION

OF THE

EARL OF ROCHESTER.



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CONVERSION
OF THE
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CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST PART OF ROCHESTER'S LIFE.

THE subject of the following narrative was pre-eminent in wickedness. It is not, however, his wickedness, but his repentance and conversion, it is designed to record. The reader may, nevertheless, be interested in a brief outline of his general history.

John Wilmot, afterwards Earl of Rochester, was born April 10, 1647, at Ditchley, in Oxfordshire. He was the son of Henry, Earl of Rochester, best known by the title of Lord Wilmot, who distinguished himself amongst the Royalists in the reigns of Charles I., and Charles II. His mother was a daughter of Sir John St. John, of an ancient family of Wiltshire.

Rochester received his grammatical education in the school at Burford, where his brilliant talents and ready capacity in the acquirement of knowledge began to develop themselves. At twelve years of age, he entered, as a nobleman, Wadham College, Oxford, under the care of Dr. Blandford, who was afterwards promoted to the sees of Oxford and Worcester. At fourteen, with several young men of distinction, he was made Master of Arts by Lord Clarendon.

While at the university, he drank deeply into the spirit and habits of the dissolute age which succeeded the severity practised and assumed during the Commonwealth. He at length wholly abandoned his studious pursuits, and even thus early addicted himself to that fruitful source of all other crimes, the vice of intemperance. About this time he travelled into France and Italy. In Italy he was attended by Dr. Balfour, who employed every sort of stimulus to restore his love of learning and study, and succeeded suffi-

ciently to prove how much he might have accomplished, had his genius, naturally splendid, been properly cultivated and rightly directed.

In the eighteenth year of his age, he returned from his travels, and devoted himself to the court. Here he became a general favourite. He was in great esteem with the king, who made him one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, and comptroller of Woodstock Park.

In the winter of 1665, he went to sea with the Earl of Sandwich, and signalized himself by great courage. In the summer following, he served again under the command of Sir Edward Spragge, and again gained himself the renown of being possessed of undaunted valour. In the heat of an engagement, the commander, being dissatisfied with one of his captains, was desirous of sending to him a reproof, but could find no one willing to run the hazard of conveying it. Wilmot immediately offered himself to the service, went out in an open boat, delivered his message, and returned amidst a storm of shot. It does not, however, appear that his reputation for bravery was long sustained.

During his travels he wholly abandoned his intemperate habits, but only to renew them with every other species of attendant wickedness. On his return, he associated himself with the dissolute and vicious, who corrupted his principles and depraved his manners.

As wine tended to inflame his fancy, and increase his pleasantry, his companions, that they might be the more diverted by his licentious merriment, eagerly encouraged his excess; and he as readily indulged in it. So enslaved was he by this detestable and degrading vice, that, for five years together, according to his own confession, he was continually drunk, or so much under the influence of intoxicating liquors as never, in all that time, to be master of himself.

These habits naturally destroyed his health and undermined his constitution, and led him to indulge in many wild and extravagant frolics. Under the meanest disguises, he often pursued the lowest vices. His favourite characters were those of a porter and a common beggar; and on one occasion, having erected a stage in Tower street, he assumed the disguise of an Italian mountebank, and practised physic for several weeks with considerable success.

He was so confirmed in the habit of swearing, that he

could not talk with any degree of warmth without the employment of oaths; and according to his own confessions, to accomplish his purposes, he would make the most solemn promises, accompanied with the most horrid imprecations, never intending to fulfil them.

While, when sober, he was what is commonly termed generous and good-natured, when under the effects of drunkenness, he was utterly regardless as to whom he might injure. He took a diabolical pleasure in defaming the innocent, and exciting quarrels between those who were friends. To this he was often instigated by no other motive than that of revenge, because of their refusal to comply with his wicked designs.

Sometimes he retired into the country, and exercised his malice and his wit in writing libels and satires, in which he did not pretend to confine himself to truth; and so established was his reputation for this style of writing, that most productions of the kind were attributed to him. This wicked practice, the lies he invented, and the revengeful spirit in which he indulged, he was so daring as to defend. His falsehoods he sometimes affirmed to be the greatest ornaments of his poems, which could not be omitted without spoiling their beauty; and as to resentment, he considered it impossible for a man to write with life unless he was the subject of it.

Like most who live dissolute and dissipated lives, he was frequently unable to meet the demands of his creditors. In such circumstances, he practised all kinds of injustice towards them, and adopted every artifice to evade them.

Thus vitiated and depraved, he attempted to shelter his wickedness behind the shield of infidelity: and ostentatiously professed to disregard all morals. He was sceptical on every point of religion. At no period of his life, however, does he appear to have been without some impression of a Supreme being; but his notions were those which Deists and infidels commonly entertain, embodying none of those attributes, which, according to the Scriptures, are the essential glory of the Deity.

He often pretended to reject the doctrine of the Divine existence altogether, and was accustomed to attend atheistical meetings, at which he was the principal disputant against God and piety.

He was the champion of irreligion and infidelity; and the tendency of his writings, no less than that of his con-

versations, was to sap the foundation of morals, and to bring every subject of religion into contempt.

In short, he was the English Voltaire; and had he lived in the same age, would in all probability have been one of his principal coadjutors. His genius was of the most brilliant order; and he possessed wit the keenest and most refined. But his genius and his wit were alike devoted to vice and impiety. His learning, notwithstanding that most of his life was spent in gaiety and dissipation, was by no means inconsiderable. He was thoroughly acquainted with the classical writings of both Greek and Latin authors; and was considered the greatest scholar of all the nobility. But his learning only served to increase the perniciousness of his influence. Both his native talents and his personal acquirements were of an extraordinary character; but they were all sacrificed at the iniquitous shrine of infidelity.

“Thus,” says Dr. Johnson, “in a course of drunken gaiety and gross sensuality—with intervals of study perhaps more criminal—with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, and a total disregard to every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness; till, at the age of one-and-thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.”

Such, then, is the character of the man whose repentance and conversion these pages are intended to record.

No one who has marked his crimes can consider with indifference his reformation, although it did not take place till towards the close of life, when only the circumstances of his dying bed could attest it.

CHAPTER II.

ROCHESTER'S CONVERSION.

IT is not to be supposed that Rochester, amidst all his licentious merriment, was without his intervals of reflection; and though they do not appear to have been always awakened by strictly religious considerations, yet the horrors they occasioned were sometimes almost past endurance.

On one occasion, after arguing against the existence of God and the obligations of religion, the universal applause he received itself struck terror into his mind; and he exclaimed to himself, "Good God! that a man who walks upright, who sees the wonderful works of God, and has the right use of his senses and his reason, should use them to the defying of his Creator!"

In general, however, his feelings were rather those of gloom and melancholy, than convictions of having sinned against his Maker. He deplored, with an agony of mind not to be expressed, his wasted strength and his injured reputation, but thought nothing of his daring rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. In one of his most dangerous sicknesses, he allowed his friends to send for divines to attend him; and while the horrors of his mind may in some measure have influenced him to a compliance with their wishes, he afterwards declared he had little inclination to do so, and that it was only in politeness he asked them to pray with him, scarcely at all uniting in their petitions himself.

His convictions were the result of some momentary reflection, or of a temporary affliction, and soon vanished away. His return to his dissolute associates revived his former notions and practices, and all serious thoughtfulness was drowned in sallies of sinful mirth and sensual indulgences. Till the illness which terminated his life, the morning cloud and the early dew were the aptest symbols of all his goodness.

The mind, however, of this depraved nobleman seems, in various periods of his life, to have been undergoing a process of preparation for the great and gracious results which the Almighty proposed to accomplish with regard to him.

Several remarkable events transpired, tending to shake his infidel opinions. When he went to sea, in 1665, Mr. Montague and another gentleman of distinction occupied the same vessel with himself. These two individuals entertained the strongest conviction that they should never return to their native land. The Earl of Rochester and the latter entered into an engagement, solemnized with religious ceremonies, as remarkable for its impiety as its singularity and absurdity. They agreed that he who died first should, in the event of his proving the existence of another state of being, appear and declare it to the other. On the day when the capture of the Dutch fleet in the port

of Bergen was anticipated, Mr. Montague, notwithstanding the strong presentiment he had of his approaching death, never abandoned the post of danger, and the other gentleman signalized his valour in the most undaunted manner; but near the end of the engagement such a trembling seized his frame that he was unable to stand. Mr. Montague ran to his assistance and caught him in his arms. Just at this moment a cannon-ball struck them and killed them both.

The impression which this event made upon the mind of Rochester was not unimportant. The strong presentiments of his friends, and the remarkable manner in which they were fulfilled, led him almost to the conclusion that the soul and the body were distinct substances. He was previously a materialist.

Another event of a similar character some time afterwards occurred within the circle of his own family. The chaplain of Lady Warre, his mother-in-law, had dreamed that on a certain day he should die. On naming it to his friends, he was so laughed at for his superstition, that he almost forgot it; but the evening before the day specified in his dream, it happened that thirteen sat down to supper, when, according to an old and superstitious saying, (though such an event was not improbable,) it was remarked that one of them would soon die; and a young lady at table in a playful mood pointed to the chaplain as the individual whose end was approaching. He remembered his dream, and became greatly distressed; but being in perfect health, no one regarded it. He however left the room under the solemn impression that he should die before the morning. On the following day, as he did not make his appearance, his door was broken open, and there, to the terror of the family, he was found a lifeless corpse.

This tended to confirm the opinion which Rochester, from the former event, had been almost constrained to adopt, and still further inclined him to think that the soul was a substance distinct from matter.

These events are stated, without pretending to offer any judgment of their character, or to intrude any opinion of the premonitory warnings which preceded them. They are not introduced at all for their own sake, though in themselves they are capable of a serious and solemn improvement: they are recorded, because Rochester himself referred to them, and declared the impression they made upon his mind to have been such as has been stated. They

may at first seem unworthy of record, but when they are viewed in connection with the doctrine of a superintending Providence, and this nobleman's ultimate repentance and conversion, they assume an aspect of considerable importance.

Rochester's vague belief in a future state soon after settled into a firm persuasion. He was seized with a severe sickness, which threatened the termination of his life. During this illness, he was so weakened by disease as to be unable to move; and yet, to use his own words, "his reason and judgment were so strong and clear, that he was confident death could not be the spending or dissolution of the soul, but only the soul's separating itself from the body."

During his recovery, he communicated to a friend his desire to become acquainted with Dr. Burnet; and in the month of October, 1679, he accordingly visited him. Dr. Burnet found him perusing, with some degree of interest, the first part of the History of the Reformation, which was then in the course of publication. He received the Doctor with the greatest frankness and cordiality, and stated that he wished to converse with him on the subject of religion. He declared his intention of candidly, and without concealment, disclosing all the views he entertained on religious topics. He further assured him, that his mind was open to conviction, and that he was prepared to abandon whatever he might be convinced was erroneous.

Dr. Burnet readily complied with his wishes; and in a series of interviews, protracted for several months, discussed most of the questions which morality and theology, natural and revealed, embrace. This learned divine combated all his infidel opinions with an acuteness of argument, and a force of persuasion, and in a strain of piety which do honour to his memory.

In the issue, Rochester assured Dr. Burnet of his conviction that vice was opposed to the interests of human society, and was as injurious as wild beasts let loose upon the world; and that therefore he was resolved, finally and for ever, and altogether, to forsake the habits of his former life, and to become strictly just and true, to be chaste and temperate, to forbear swearing, and all wicked and lascivious talking, and to worship and to pray to his Maker; and though he was not fully persuaded of the truth of Christianity, that his wit should never hereafter be employed in its abuse, and the corruption of those who believed it.

This resolution, to some extent, he practically exempli-

fied, frequently expressing himself happy to a friend who often conversed with him, assuring him that he would embrace the faith of the gospel, and would never employ any means to dissuade his friend from doing so.

It will not, however, be a matter of surprise to the Christian reader, that there were occasions when his resolution was violated. According to his own acknowledgment, he afterwards argued against God and religion with greater vigour than all his life before.

But the period was now coming when his mind was to undergo, not a partial, but complete transformation. Hitherto, his views had been only modified, and his habits only in part changed; but now, both his principles and his practices were about to be formed altogether anew.

On his recovery from sickness, he left London for Somersetshire, but was soon compelled by a relapse to hasten to his residence at Woodstock.

In the course of this journey, God appears to have been wonderfully operating on his mind; and he found, with the great convert Paul, how hard and how vain it was to resist the working of his mighty power. Such was the manner in which his heart was influenced, that the most strenuous opponent of all religion became its most zealous advocate; and while he was awed by the most tremendous views of the Divine Majesty, it was not without their being combined and softened with some pleasing contemplations of his nature and attributes. The loveliness of piety and virtue also began to appear still more attractive to his mind. He himself confessed that never in his life before had he been so far advanced towards the attainment of happiness. The commission of some aggravated sins had often been followed with an agony of mind scarcely to be endured; but he had struggled against his convictions, and chased them away. Now, his feelings had assumed a more permanent and settled state.

His arrival at Woodstock Park, conducts us to the closing scenes of his life, and the completion of the work of God in his soul. He was visited by Mr. Parsons, the excellent chaplain of his mother, the Countess Dowager of Rochester. He received Mr. Parsons gladly, and treated him with every mark of respect; he blessed God for sending him to one who so much needed his counsels and his prayers. He acknowledged with what injustice he had formerly treated the ministers of the gospel, reproaching them with pride and arrogance, avarice and hypocrisy;

but now he regarded them as the servants of God and the messengers of peace and salvation.

Still his views were imperfect, and distress and despair prevailed over hope and desire. But he was not long suffered to continue in this state. God clearly manifested his mercy towards him, and soon after enabled this daring rebel against his authority, now humbled into penitence, to rejoice in a sense of his favour through faith in his Son. The 53d chapter of Isaiah was blessed to his complete conversion. Mr. Parsons, guided beyond doubt by wisdom from on high, read it to him, tracing the parallel between the prediction and the events of the Saviour's passion and death, in which it was fulfilled, thus deducing an irresistible argument in favour of Christianity, and exhibiting the great doctrine of the atonement, as the sole foundation of the sinner's hope. The effect on the mind of Rochester was almost instantaneous. He who said, "Let there be light, and there was light," shone into his mind to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The darkness of his soul fled before the Spirit's illuminations and the light of the Divine countenance. His mind expanded, and his heart opened to receive the truth as it is in Jesus. He believed in Christ, and the joy of faith became his portion. The word of God now filled him with admiration, and the 53d chapter of Isaiah was soon imprinted on his memory.

At this period he again sent for his friend, Dr. Burnet, and, though he was greatly debilitated by disease, he addressed to him the following letter.

"Woodstock Park, June 25, 1680.

"My most honoured Dr. Burnet,

"My spirits and body decay so equally together, that I shall write you a letter, as weak as I am in person. I begin to value churchmen above all the men in the world, and you above all the churchmen I know in it. If God be yet pleased to spare me longer in this world, I hope in your conversation to be exalted to that degree of piety that the world may see how much I abhor what I so long loved, and how much I glory in repentance and in God's service. Bestow your prayers upon me, that God would spare me (if it be his good will) to show a true repentance and amendment of life for the time to come; or else, if the Lord pleaseth to put an end to my worldly being now, that he would mercifully accept my death-bed repentance, and

perform that promise he hath been pleased to make—that, at what time soever a sinner doth repent, he would receive him. Put up these prayers, most dear doctor, to Almighty God, for your most obedient and languishing servant,

“ ROCHESTER.”

Dr. Burnet accordingly visited him, and found him in a state of mind the most becoming and delightful. The intercourse which ensued was of a most pleasing and satisfactory character. Rochester felt that the time of his departure was at hand. It will not, therefore, be a matter of surprise, that one of the first questions he proposed to Dr. Burnet was to ascertain his opinion of a death-bed repentance. To this the doctor replied, that to form an opinion, he must know something of the circumstances under which it took place. The account which the earl gave in return was substantially what has been related. He referred to the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and said that, as it was read to him, (we here employ his own words, as Dr. Burnet has given them,) he felt an inward force upon him, which did so enlighten his mind and convince him, that he could resist it no longer; for the words had an authority which shot like rays or beams in his mind, so that he was not only convinced by the reasonings he had about it, which satisfied his understanding, but by a power which did so effectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour as if he had seen him in the clouds. He had this chapter read so often to him, that he “got it by heart, and went through a great part of it,” says the bishop, “in discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly pleasure, giving me his reflections on it; some of which I remember.” ‘Who hath believed our report?’ ‘Here,’ he said, “was foretold the opposition the gospel was to meet with, from such wretches as he was.” ‘He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.’ On this he said, “The meanness of his appearance and person has made vain and foolish people disparage him, because he came not in such a fool’s coat as they delighted in.” Many other observations he made, which were not noted down; enlarging on many passages, with an elevated degree of enjoyment, and applying them to his own consolation.

This narration from Rochester’s own lips is peculiarly interesting, and is no small testimony to the genuineness of his conversion. What, according to the Scriptures, are

God's appointed means for the accomplishment of this work? It is the word of truth: and it was by the simple exhibition of the doctrines of the cross, so fully set forth in this most remarkable prophecy, that the conversion of Rochester was effected. And what is the appointed agency to which the word of truth owes its efficacy? It is the Spirit of God, whose office it is to take of the things of Christ, and by presenting them to the sinner's view, to convince him of sin and righteousness. And the operations of the Divine Spirit Rochester most distinctly acknowledges when he speaks of an inward force which convinced, enlightened, and constrained him. It is not, moreover, unworthy of remark, that the very portion of Scripture, which was blessed to the conversion of Rochester, is the self-same which, according to the evangelical historian, was attended with the like happy results in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch.

But there are other and no less substantial proofs of the reality of this nobleman's repentance and conversion. His illness lasted for nine weeks, and every evidence of an entire change was afforded which the time and circumstances would allow.

He was deeply sensible of the guilt and aggravation of his numberless and enormous sins. He felt that he had not only neglected and dishonoured, but openly defied his Maker; and not content to rebel alone, that he had induced many others daringly to contend against the Majesty of heaven. Under the influence of these feelings, he would sometimes exclaim, "O blessed God, can such a horrid creature as I am be accepted by thee, who has denied thy being, and contemned thy power? Can there be mercy and pardon for me? Will God own such a wretch as I?" On one occasion, he was heard to say, "that if Christ, who died for greater as well as less sinners, did not speedily apply his infinite merits to his poor soul, his wound was such that no man could conceive or bear; crying out that he was the vilest wretch and dog that the sun shined upon, or the earth bore; that now he saw his error in not living up to that reason with which God had endowed him, and that he wished he had been a starving leper crawling in a ditch, or a link-boy, or a beggar, or for his whole life confined to a dungeon, rather than thus to have sinned against God."

His sense of sin was not greater than his abhorrence of it. He frequently avowed his hatred of his former prac-

tices, and his heartfelt repentance of all the folly and madness of which he had been guilty; so resolute was his mind in its aversion to vice, that he solemnly declared he would not commit the least sin to gain a kingdom.

His faith and hope were clearly fixed on the atoning sacrifice of Christ. About the middle of his sickness, he exclaimed, "Shall the unspeakable joys of heaven be conferred on me! O mighty Saviour, never but through thine infinite love and satisfaction! Oh never, but by the purchase of thy blood!"

His esteem for the Scriptures has already been referred to. By his express desire, they were repeatedly read to him, and he resolved that if God should spare his life, he would habitually peruse and meditate upon them himself. He acknowledged that all the seeming absurdities and contradictions which men of corrupt minds had charged upon them had vanished, and that now, having received the truth in the love of it, he saw their excellency and beauty.

His spirit was truly devotional. He might almost be said to pray without ceasing. Mr. Parsons speaks of his prayers as being "excellent and correct," and of the frequency with which he desired him to intercede at the throne of grace on his behalf.

Still he was not without his temptations. During one night especially, he cried out, "How terribly the tempter assaulted me with lewd and wicked imaginations!" He was enabled, however, triumphantly to add, "But I thank God I abhor them all, and by the power of his grace, which I am sure is sufficient for me, I have overcome them. 'Tis the malice of the devil because I am rescued from him; and the goodness of God frees me from all my spiritual enemies!"

His concern for his children was nothing short of the solicitude of a Christian father. He often called them to his side, and spoke to them with a tenderness which, if it may be conceived, cannot be described. Before his death, he blessed them, and prayed for them, and commended them to the protection of the Father of the fatherless. For his son he was especially concerned, expressing the greatest anxiety that he might never be a wit, or, as he explained it, one of those wretched creatures who pride themselves in abusing God and religion, and in denying his being and providence; but that he might become an honest and religious man, who alone could be the support and blessing of his family. On one occasion, addressing Dr. Burnet, he desired him to look upon his children, and said, "See

how good God has been to me in giving me so many blessings, while I have carried myself towards him like an ungrateful and unthankful dog."

His conduct towards his servants evinced the radical change which had been effected in his heart. He had formerly treated them with great haughtiness, but he now behaved to them with the utmost kindness.

His readiness to forgive every injury he had received, and to implore forgiveness for every injury he had committed, was very exemplary. In the heat of a moment of impatience, he employed an improper epithet in reference to one of his attendants: on being reminded of it, he exclaimed, "Oh! that language of fiends, which was so familiar to me, and which still hangs about me! Surely no one has more deserved to be damned than I have." And having implored the pardon of God, he desired that the person might be called, that he might ask forgiveness of him.

He made every possible arrangement for the payment of his debts, thus proving to his creditors that, while as an infidel he could defraud, as a Christian he must be just.

He ordered his profane and lewd writings, together with his obscene and filthy pictures, to be burned. And certain it is that, had his most ardent desires been realized, not one would afterwards have seen the light.

His charges to his friends were characterized by that faithfulness, fervour, and affection, which might be expected from such a character, under such circumstances. He admonished them to the fear and love of God, and warned them against abusing his long-suffering and forbearance. In reference to one individual, he gave it in charge to Dr. Burnet to tell him that, even if there were no hereafter, yet all the pleasures he had ever known in sin were not worth the torture he had endured on account of them. And addressing himself to a gentleman who visited his death-bed, he said, "O remember that you contemn God no more. He is an avenging God, and will visit you for your sins. He will in mercy, I hope, touch your conscience sooner or later, as he has done mine. You and I have been friends and sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you. We have been all mistaken in our opinions: our persuasions have been false and groundless; therefore, God grant you repentance."

He was sincerely desirous, for the sake of those who had been the companions of his crimes, that his conversion should be publicly known.

He accordingly charged Mr. Parsons to declare it; and, lest the testimony of others should not be sufficiently satisfactory, he has left his own, signed by his own hand, and attested by witnesses whose signatures are also attached. It is as follows:

“For the benefit of all those whom I may have drawn into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my last declaration, which I deliver in the presence of the great God, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be judged:

“That from the bottom of my soul, I detest and abhor the whole course of my former life—that I think I cannot sufficiently admire the goodness of God, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by which I have hitherto lived without hope and without God in the world, have been an open enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to the Holy Spirit of his grace—and that the greatest testimony of my charity to such, is to warn them in the name of God, and as they regard the welfare of their immortal souls, no more to deny his being or his providence, or despise his goodness; no more to make a mock of sin, or condemn the pure and excellent religion of my ever blessed Redeemer, through whose merits alone I, one of the greatest of sinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveness. Amen.

“Declared and signed,

“J. ROCHESTER,

“In the presence of

“ANNE ROCHESTER,

“ROBERT PARSONS.

June 19, 1680.”

To this may be added that, throughout his illness, he cherished great resignation to the divine will. In reference to his death, he expressed himself perfectly ready to leave himself to the divine disposal; and in reference to his life, if God should spare it, he hoped to bring glory to his name, especially by his efforts to convince others of their danger if they continued impenitent.

His closing moments were passed in rapture and in triumph. “I shall die,” said the once infidel, but now Christian Rochester, “but what unspeakable glories do I see; what joys beyond thought or expression, am I sensible of! I am assured of God’s mercy to me through Jesus Christ. O how I long to die, and to be with my Saviour.”

In this state of mind he died on the 26th of July, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-third year; and was so worn away by a long illness, that he expired without a struggle.

CHAPTER III.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NARRATIVE.

Two important facts are brought under our notice by the narrative which has just been concluded. The first is, that infidelity and wickedness are found in association. The second is, that the most notorious infidels have borne the strongest testimonies to Christianity. On each of these subjects, a few remarks will be offered.

I. Infidelity and wickedness are found in association. This general statement may be met by two objections. We shall be told, that if infidelity and wickedness have been found in association, Christianity and wickedness have also been found in the same position. That this has been the case, we are not prepared to deny. But we are bold to affirm that, in the great majority of such cases, it was not a genuine, but a false, or at best a merely nominal Christianity. And what is still more obvious, and more easily decided, it may with equal boldness be asserted, that these have been the exceptions and not the rule; and that in general, if not universally, vice has fled before the face of Christian truth. This we may unhesitatingly challenge any infidel, yea, all the infidels in the world, to disprove.

But it may be further objected, that we are deducing a general fact from an isolated instance; and that, though the infidelity of Rochester was accompanied by great enormities, this does not prove that such is uniformly the case. It does not prove it, but it suggests it; and there are other facts, almost numberless, which completely establish it. Specimens of these shall be adduced.

The morality which the great advocates of infidelity have avowed and taught has only to be generally practised in order to deluge the world with every species of crime.

According to Lord Herbert, constitutional sins are not criminal, and lust and anger as innocent as thirst and drowsiness.

Mr. Hobbes asserts, that a man's own judgment is the

only standard of right and wrong; and that every man has a right to the possession of all things, if he can but obtain them.

Lord Bolingbroke maintained, that all morality may be resolved into selfishness; and that the chief end of man is to gratify the lusts of the flesh—that the indulgence of ambition, sensuality, and avarice is lawful, if consistent with safety—that vanity is the only foundation of modesty—that polygamy is a part of the law of nature, and that adultery is no violation of it.

Mr. Hume declared that self-denial, self-mortification, and humility, so far from being virtues, are mischievous vices; and that adultery must be practised if a man would enjoy all the advantages of life.

Voltaire advocated the unlimited gratification of the sensual appetites; and Helvetius held that it is impolitic to regard *gallantry* (that is, adultery) as a vice.

Such then are the sentiments of morality which infidel champions have advocated; and their practice has been in exact accordance with their precepts.

Lord Herbert, Hobbes, Lord Shaftesbury, Woolaston, Tyndal, Chubb, Lord Bolingbroke, and Collins, were all guilty of lying and hypocrisy. Woolaston was a gross blasphemer. Blunt committed suicide because his sister-in-law refused to marry him. Tyndal was infamous for almost every vice. Voltaire, with the most bare-faced hypocrisy, at the very time in which he was doubting the existence of God, plotting the destruction of Christianity, and introducing the phrase, "*Ecrasez l'Infame!*"* as the watchword of his party—at that very time, he solemnly professed his belief in the tenets of the Church of Rome, received the host, and with bended knee and uplifted eye adored the cross of Christ. He was besides a shameless adulterer; and with his abandoned mistress, violated the confidence of his visitors by opening their letters. He was totally destitute of principle, moral or religious; and his filthy sensuality, his persecuting envy, and his base profligacy, hardly fail to suggest the idea of his being the very incarnation of vice.†

But enough: these are facts attested by undoubted authorities, and the writings and confessions of the very men to whom they refer. Nothing more can be demanded in

* "Crush the wretch," meaning Jesus Christ.

† See "Dr. Leland's View of Deistical Writers," and "Horne's Introduction to the Scriptures."

support of the statement with which we set out. If these facts be true, infidelity has beyond all controversy, been uniformly associated with the worst and most degrading forms of wickedness. It has always been in fellowship with crime. They seem to subsist together, each sustaining the being, and promoting the cause of the other. The connexion is so obvious, that, unless men were blinded by the grossest prejudice, they could never think of the one without calling to remembrance the other.

Out of the fact thus established, two questions of considerable importance arise. Infidelity and wickedness exist together. It is therefore obvious to conclude that they have some natural and necessary relation to each other, and their generally existing together seems to warrant the conclusion, that the relation they sustain is that of cause and effect. Does, then, infidelity generate wickedness? or, does wickedness generate infidelity? An answer in the affirmative must be rendered to both these inquiries. They are each the cause of the other.

That infidelity is a fruitful source of iniquity, it is by no means difficult to prove. What is infidelity? Infidelity rejects the only authorized record of man's moral duties and obligations. Infidelity either denies, or leaves in all the uncertainty of mere conjecture, the existence of a future state and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments; and thus destroys one of the most powerful motives to virtue, and the strongest barriers to crime. And infidelity, if it admits that there is a God, explains away his moral attributes, and the idea of his superintending providence; and, in short, reduces our notions of the Deity to those of a Being, who indeed is distinguished by all surpassing majesty, but who is so wrapt up in the grandeur of his own nature, and so absorbed in the sublimities of his own contemplations; as to be utterly regardless, if not of all the universe, at least of such insignificant creatures as the children of men. Infidelity, therefore, separates between mankind and God, and does away with that recognition of relationship between the creature and the Creator which is so supremely adapted to ennoble and elevate the mind; and, by explaining away the moral attributes of God, robs us of that perfect standard of unsullied purity and unbounded excellence we are taught in the Scriptures to make the great object of our aim, our efforts, and desires. Infidelity leaves man wholly to himself, and without any superhuman restraint to control his conduct or to check the indulgence

of his depraved inclinations. And what is man thus left? Let the experiment be tried; and let even the arbitrary restraints which human governments and human customs have put upon him be removed; and what would he become? A thousand times more brutish than he is. Let ambition, avarice, envy, and revenge, go forth in all their unbridled strength to satisfy their cravings, and who would be spared, what interests would be regarded, and what protection short of superior might, would there be against the sacrifice of life? And when it is considered that these passions have an existence, in a greater or less degree, in every man's bosom, so that, to complete the picture, we must conceive of the teeming millions of mankind all influenced in the same way, it is impossible to imagine the universal desolation, rapine, and slaughter, which would inevitably ensue.

That this is not mere declamation and fancy, facts abundantly prove. God has once, at least, and in one nation in the history of the world, allowed the experiment to be tried. In France, infidelity was permitted for a short period to take to itself a universal reign. And what a reign was that! It was a reign of terror, debauchery, and murder. Righteousness fled from the streets of the atheistical republic. Reason was the divinity the populace professed to adore; but in reality the grossest sensuality was the idol of every heart. All social ties were snapped asunder; and parricide was accounted heroism. Women became the betrayers of their husbands; and mothers were instrumental in the condemnation of their sons. "The kingdom appeared to be changed into one great prison, and the inhabitants converted into felons. To contemplative men it seemed for a season as if the knell of the whole nation was tolled, and the world summoned to its execution and funeral. Within the short period of ten years, not less than three millions of human beings are supposed to have perished in that single country."

It is then, as every candid mind must confess, established beyond doubt, both by the nature and the facts of the case, that infidelity has been a most fruitful source of horrid miseries and diabolical crimes.

It is also true, that wickedness is in numberless instances the chief source of infidelity. Nor is it, considering the nature of the Christian religion, a matter of surprise that it should be so. Christianity exhibits the infinite Jehovah in the capacity of a moral Governor, and as such proclaiming his laws, and enforcing, by penalties the most dreadful,

the obedience of every subject of his widely extended dominions; and, according to Christianity, these laws are a transcript of God's own character: they are holy as God is holy, and require his creatures to cultivate the same unsullied purity by which he himself is distinguished. And hence Christian precepts admonish us, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present evil world—to be temperate in all things—to mortify the deeds of the body—to crucify the lusts of the flesh—in a word, to bring every thought and feeling into subjection to the will of God. Now who can wonder that wickedness should engender infidelity against such a system as this? The wonder would be if it did not do so.

A man living in the habit of sin naturally wishes that Christianity were false. He knows that he is violating its commandments; and he must feel that, if Christianity be true, and he continue to violate its commands, he must be eternally lost. "If I sin, the wrath of God abideth on me. In sinning, I am treasuring up to myself wrath against the day of wrath. By sinning, I am sealing my doom to the darkness and the despair of hell." These are the reflections which Christianity is calculated to awaken in the sinner's mind. And who can bear them? What man, if he believes Christianity, can endure them? And if, notwithstanding, he is resolved to continue in a course of wickedness, what wonder that he should at least wish that Christianity were false! What wonder, if he should strive to chase away every impression of its being divine in its origin! What wonder, if he shall labour to believe that it is a mere fable, which designing priests have invented, to enslave the minds of the people, and to rob them of the enjoyments of life in order to aggrandize themselves! Surely the wonder would be if it were not so! And when men wish to disbelieve, and when they strive and labour to be sceptical, who that knows any thing of the constitution and operations of the human mind does not know how soon they may accomplish their desires? Men first wish Christianity were false, and then leap to the conclusion that it is so.

This is the history of infidelity in the case of vast multitudes who espouse its cause. Young men, especially, indulge in sins which they know Christianity reproveth and condemns. They wish there were no Christianity. In this state of mind, they receive into their hands some infidel

publication, or listen to the flimsy objections of some superficial sceptic. They drink with eagerness the poison presented to them, and soon feel its baneful, but in their esteem delightful influence. It operates on the moral, like an opiate on the physical system. Conscience sleeps, convictions die, the claims of Christianity depart; and they, like a man soothed into pleasant slumbers, dream of their freedom from the superstitions of ages, and their intellectual superiority in having shaken off the yoke by which such immense numbers of men and women are still held in captivity.

Thus, while infidelity generates wickedness, wickedness is itself a most fruitful source of infidelity.

Is the reader sceptical himself? Let him be entreated to give what has been advanced the most serious consideration; and let him especially remember that, however he may have been accustomed to consider Christianity, the statements now commended to his notice are not mere opinions and theories; they are plain, unsophisticated, unquestionable facts.

Now what is the deduction from these facts which we are inevitably compelled to make? Infidelity and wickedness are generally found in association; and they are each productive of the other. Must not infidelity and wickedness then be akin to each other? Must not their nature be the same? And can, therefore, infidelity be right? Is wickedness right? It is almost presumption to ask the question. Must not then infidelity be a ruinous error? There can be no other alternative. Let the reader sift the matter as much as he can; let him look at these facts in every light in which they can be viewed; and then let him determine whether, if he has embraced, or has been disposed to embrace infidel systems, he ought not at once to reject them. Did Christianity generate wickedness, or foster iniquity, it ought to be instantly and for ever abandoned; and the same course should be adopted as to infidelity.

II. The second fact which the narrative of Rochester suggests, is, that the most notorious infidels have borne the strongest testimonies to Christianity. They have done so in a variety of ways. We shall endeavour to lay before the reader a few instances.

Some have testified in favour of the Christian system by incidentally and unwittingly supporting the evidences on which it is based. Here we may instance Volney, in his

“Ruins of Empires.” In the commencement of that work, his “Genius,” pointing to the desolations of Time, says, “These heaps of ruin that you observe in the narrow valley, laved by the Nile, are all that remains of the opulent cities that gave lustre to the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia. Further on the coast that you behold, limited by the sea on one side, and by a ridge of mountains on the other, was the abode of the Phœnician nations. There stood Tyre, Sidon, Ascalon, Gaza, and Berytus. Hence grew up the magnificence of Persepolis, of which you may observe the mouldering columns—of Babylon, the ruins of which are trodden under foot of men, of Nineveh, whose name seems to be threatened with the same oblivion which has overtaken its greatness.”

Now mark the language of prophecy in reference to at least three of these cities—Tyre, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

Of Tyre, it was predicted by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxvi. 3—5, “Therefore, thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers : I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea : and it shall become a spoil to the nations.” Concerning Babylon, it was prophesied by Jeremiah, chap. l. 39, “Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein : and it shall be no more inhabited for ever ; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.” The desolations of Nineveh are predicted at large, in the highest strains of poetry, in the book of the prophet Nahum. To give only an example, in chap. ii. 13, and in chap. iii. 5, 6, it is written, “Behold I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke—and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.” “And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing stock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste ; who will bemoan her ?” Now compare these prophecies with what Volney states of the “ruin of Tyre”—“of Babylon, trodden under foot of men”—“of Nineveh, whose name seems to be threatened with the same oblivion which has overtaken its greatness.” Here then we have

an infidel writer describing existing scenes, which show the fulfilment of Scripture prophecies, delivered no fewer than two thousand five hundred years ago, and at a time when these very states were enjoying their highest prosperity—when they were the glory of the nations—the boast of the world. Truly God, in this, as in numberless other cases, and in instances which follow, has displayed his all-controlling power in thus wonderfully causing the eater to bring forth meat, and the strong to bring forth sweetness.

Again, other infidel champions have borne as strong a testimony to Christianity by their constrained confessions in its favour. Here, we need only refer to Rousseau. In a letter to a friend, he says, “I confess that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me, that the sanctity of the Gospel speaks to my heart. View the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp, what a littleness have they when compared with this! Is it possible that a book at once so sublime and simple should be the work of mere men? Is it possible that he whose history it records, should be a mere man? Is this the style of an enthusiast, or of a mere sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What affecting grace in his instructions! What elevation in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourse! What presence of mind, what delicacy, and what justness in his replies! When Plato paints his imaginary Just Man, covered with all the ignominy of guilt, and deserving all the honours of virtue, he paints Jesus Christ in every stroke of his pencil. The resemblance is so strong, that all the fathers have perceived it, and that it is impossible to mistake it. What prejudices, what blindness must they have who dare to draw a comparison between the son of Sophroniscus and the Son of Mary! What distance is there between the one and the other! As Socrates died without pain and without disgrace, he found no difficulty in supporting his character to the end; and if this easy death had not shed a lustre on his life, we might have doubted whether Socrates, with all his genius, was any thing but a sophist. They say that he invented morality; others before him had practised it. He only said what they had done. He only read lessons on their examples. Aristides had been just, before Socrates explained the nature of justice. Leonidas had died for his country before Socrates made it the duty of men to love their country. Sparta had been temperate, before Socrates praised temperance. Greece had abounded in virtuous men, before he defined virtue.

But where could Jesus, among his countrymen, find that elevated and pure morality of which he alone furnished both the precepts and the examples? The most lofty wisdom was heard from the bosom of the most furious fanaticism; and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues honoured the vilest of all people. The death of Socrates, serenely philosophizing with his friends, is the most gentle that one can desire—that of Jesus, expiring in torments, injured, derided, reviled by a whole people, is the most horrible that one can fear. When Socrates takes the poisoned cup, he blesses him who presents it, and who at the same time weeps—Jesus, in the midst of a horrid punishment, prays for his enraged executioners. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a God! Shall we say that the history of the Gospel is invented at pleasure? My friend, it is not thus that men invent. And the actions of Socrates, concerning which no one doubts, are less attested than those of Jesus Christ. After all, this is shifting the difficulty instead of solving it; for it would be more inconceivable that a number of men should forge this book, in concert, than that one should furnish the subject of it. Jewish authors would never have devised such a manner and such morality. And the Gospel has characters of truth, so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that its inventors would be still more astonishing than its hero.”

Here we have the character of our blessed Lord drawn by the hand of an infidel. A Christian would hardly have delineated it more correctly; and the arguments deduced from it in favour of the Scriptures are so conclusive, that we can hardly realize the thought of an infidel's being the writer of it, or at least continuing to be one after he had finished it.

Again, other infidel advocates have testified to Christianity by the remorse and despair of their dying hour. It will be enough, here, to instance the case of Voltaire. He endured horrors never to be expressed. Immediately after his return from the theatre, one evening, he felt that the stroke of death had arrested him. His friends instantly assembled around him; and his brethren of the Illuminati exhorted him to die like a hero. In spite of their admonitions, he sent for the *curé* of St. Gervais, and after confession, signed, in the presence of the Abbé Mignot, his nephew, and the Marquis of Viellevielle, one of the Illuminati, his recantation of his former principles. After this visit, the *curé* was no more allowed to see him. It has,

however, crept out by means of the nurse who attended him, that he died in unutterable agony of mind. D'Alembert, Diderot, and about twenty others who beset his apartment, never approached him without receiving some bitter execrations. Often he would curse them, and exclaim, "Retire! It is you who have brought me to my present state! Begone! I could have done without you all; but you could not exist without me; and what a wretched glory have you procured me!" These reproaches were succeeded by the dreadful recollection of his own part in the conspiracy against religion. He was heard, in anguish and in dread, alternately supplicating and blaspheming that God, against whom he had conspired. He would cry out in piteous accents, "O Christ! O Jesus Christ!" and then complain that he was abandoned by God and man. His physician, Dr. Tronchin, thunderstruck, retired from his bedside, and observed, that the furies of Orestes would give but a faint idea of those of Voltaire.

To an account so full of horror, not a word need be added. May every sceptic who reads it take the solemn warning which it gives.

We also observe, that some notorious infidels have, happily for themselves as well as for the cause of truth, testified to Christianity by their sincere conversion to its faith. Such is the testimony of Rochester, which these pages are more especially intended to furnish. It is before the reader; and he may judge of it for himself. It needs no further comment.

To these testimonies, we add the name of one of the greatest philosophers of his age, not long since deceased—that of Baron Cuvier, the geologist and comparative anatomist of France. In the earlier period of his philosophical career, he had been accustomed to treat with the utmost scorn the Mosaic account of the creation and the deluge, and hence, to regard the Scriptures as a mere fiction of human invention. His views, however, as he proceeded in his researches, became modified; and towards the close of his life, he was understood to have abandoned his former opinions, and to have confessed the divinity of the Christian system. About this period, a meeting of the Bible Society was to be held at Paris; and a knowledge of the change in Baron Cuvier's views led to his being invited. He cordially expressed his acceptance of the invitation, and acknowledged the transformation his mind had undergone. In the prospect of the meeting, he prepared a most

elaborate speech, containing a recantation of his former sentiments, and a declaration of those he then entertained. His presence was, doubtless, anticipated with no small degree of interest; but God had ordered it otherwise. The hand of death forbade it, and just before the time appointed for the meeting, seized him for its prey. Attempts were made to conceal this fact; but they were unavailing. It has gone forth to the world, and will tell upon the minds of men, and in favour of Christianity, without doubt, as its great Founder designed it.

The speech, it is hoped and believed, though that also has been suppressed, will in due time be presented to the public.

Such, then, are some of the testimonies which the most notorious infidels have borne to Christianity. Volney has supported the evidences on which it is based; Rousseau has declared his convictions of its more than human excellence, and has argued most conclusively in its favour; Voltaire died in the agonies of despair because he had conspired against it; and Rochester and Cuvier renounced their scepticism with regard to it, and avowed themselves converts to its truth. These facts are before the reader: he must determine and act in reference to them for himself. They are not adduced as direct evidences of Christianity. But, since the very champions of infidelity have testified to the religion of the Bible, have opposed their own opinions, and in some instances have abandoned them altogether, and declared themselves Christians—since this has been the case, it must be confessed, that those who have embraced their systems have some reasons to distrust them too, and ought at least, with some suspicion of their truth, to investigate the relative claims of what infidelity rejects and Christianity asserts. We beseech the sceptic, in all faithfulness to himself as well as to that cause which he has been accustomed to despise, to consider the subject in this light. He is bound thus to act. It is demanded by every pretension he makes to being a fair and honest inquirer after truth.

And suppose—for after what has been advanced, the infidel himself can hardly deem it presumptuous to make the supposition—suppose, after all, infidelity should be false and Christianity should be true; and suppose the Great God to be what the Christian system reveals him, and that the soul is immortal, and that the present is only a probationary state; and suppose that God, according to the Scriptures has appointed a day in the which he will judge the

world, and that every man must appear before him to render an account of the deeds done in the body, and to receive a righteous reward—and what then? Ah! what then? Why, the infidel himself must be there; and how must an infidel appear before the bar of God? The Scriptures declare, that they who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Such, if the Scriptures be true, is the doom of the infidel.

But this need not be your doom. Believe the gospel you have rejected, receive the Saviour you have despised; and there is mercy for you still. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. A Paul was saved by it—a Rochester was saved by it—and you may be saved by it. In conclusion, therefore, be entreated no longer to esteem the doctrine of the Cross as foolishness, but as the power of God unto salvation.

THE END.

8

JESUS CHRIST

THE

ONLY FOUNDATION.

BY PRESIDENT DAVIES.

THE

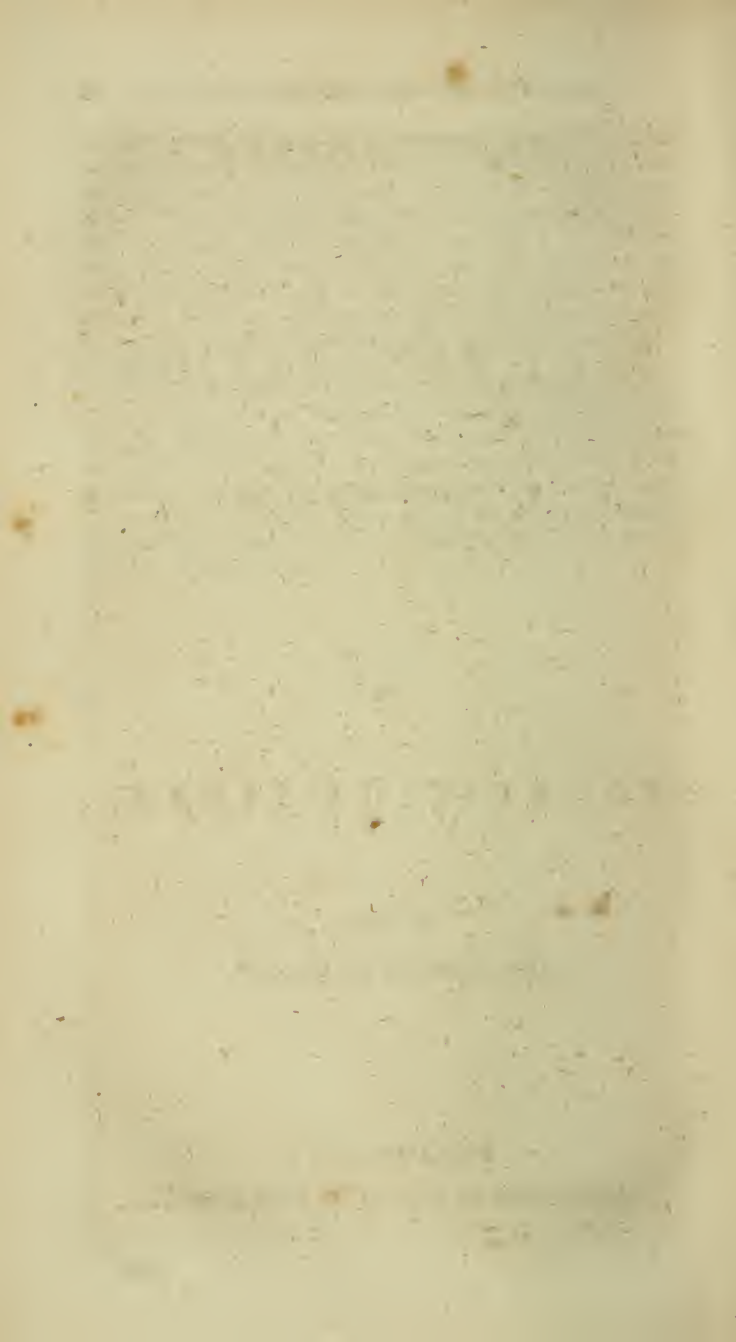
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JESUS CHRIST

THE

ONLY FOUNDATION.

ISAIAH xxviii. 16, 17.—Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.

THE context, like many other passages of the prophetic Scriptures, seems to have a double sense. The primary sense may be thus represented. The judgments of God were ready to break in upon, and overwhelm the impenitent nation of the Jews, like a “tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing,” and bearing all before it. (ver. 2.) The prophet had repeatedly given them timely warning of these approaching judgments; but they still continued secure and impenitent, and unapprehensive of danger. They flattered themselves they had artifice enough to keep themselves safe. They thought themselves impregnablely intrenched and fortified in their riches, their strong holds, and the sanctity of their temple and nation. They might also think their arts of negotiation would secure them from the invasion of the neighbouring powers, particularly the Assyrians, to whom they were most exposed. These were the lies which they made their refuge, and the falsehood under which they hid themselves. These, they imagined, like moles or ditches, would keep off the deluge of wrath, so that it should not come to them, much less overwhelm them; and they were as secure as if they had made “a covenant with death, and entered into an agreement with hell, or the grave,” not to hurt them. Therefore the prophet represents them as saying, “We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement: when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies (that is, what the prophet calls lies) our refuge;” and, under, what he calls, falsehood have we hid ourselves; (ver. 15). It is in this connexion my text is introduced; and it points out a solid ground of hope, in opposition to the refuge of lies in which these sinners trusted; as if he had said, “Since the refuge to which you flee is not safe, and since my people need another:” “Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation:”

that is, "My promises, my providential care, the supporting influences of my grace, and the various means I shall take for the comfort and safety of my people in this national distress, shall as effectually bear them up as a firm foundation of stone does a building erected upon it. They that build their hopes upon this foundation, shall stand, unshaken, amidst all the storms and tempests of national calamity that may beat upon our guilty land." "He that believeth shall not make haste;" that is, "he that trusts in this refuge, shall not be struck into a distracted hurry and consternation upon the sudden appearance of these calamities. He shall not, like a person surprised with unexpected danger, flee in a wild haste to improper means for his safety, and thus throw himself into destruction by his ill-advised precipitant attempts to keep out of it; but he shall be calm and serene, and have presence of mind to take the most proper measures for his deliverance." Or the meaning may be, "He that believeth, shall not make such haste to be delivered, as to flee to unlawful means for that purpose; but will patiently wait God's time to deliver him in a lawful way." The prophet proceeds, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;" that is, God will try the Jews with strict justice, as an architect examines a building with a line and plummet. Such of them who have built their hopes upon the foundation above described, shall stand firm and unshaken, whatever tempests fall upon them, like a regular and stately building, founded upon a solid rock. But as to others, they shall be overwhelmed in the public calamity! "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies in which they trusted; and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And then your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then shall they be trodden down by it." (ver. 18.)

This seems to be the primary sense of the context, and thus it is probable, the Jews understood it, who did not enjoy that additional light which the gospel sheds upon it. But I must add, that it is very likely that, even in this primary sense of the context, the text refers to Jesus Christ. There seems to be an unnatural force put upon the words when they are applied to any other; and the connexion will admit of their application to him, even in this sense, thus: "Since the refuge of sinners is a refuge of lies, behold I will provide one that will effectually secure all that flee to it from all the judgments to which they are exposed." "I lay in

Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone," &c. "I send my Son into the world as an Almighty Saviour; and all that put themselves under his protection, and build their hopes upon him, shall be so safe, that all the calamities of life shall not do them a lasting injury; and the vengeance of the eternal world shall never fall upon them."

But whether we can find Christ in the primary sense of these words or not, it is certain we shall find him in their ultimate and principal sense. And we have the authority of an inspired apostle for this application. Peter quotes this passage according to the Septuagint, with some alteration, and applies it expressly to Christ. "To whom coming," says he, "as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, yē also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, "Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded," 1 Pet. ii. 4—6. Taking the passage in this evangelical sense, the general meaning is to this purpose: The Lord Jesus is represented as a tried, precious and sure foundation, laid in Zion; that is, in the church, for the sons of men to build their hopes upon. His church, thus built on him, is compared to a stately, regular, and impregnable temple, consecrated to the service of God to offer up spiritual sacrifices; and proof against all the storms and tempests that may beat upon it. It shall stand firm and immovable through all eternity—for its foundation is sure.

But, alas! though Jesus Christ be the only foundation, yet the sons of men are so full of themselves, that they venture to build their hopes upon something else, and promise themselves safety, though they reject this sure foundation.

They think themselves as secure as if they had entered into a treaty with death and the grave, and brought them over to their interest.

But, lo! the wrath of God will at last beat upon a guilty world, like a storm of hail, or break in upon it like an overwhelming torrent; then every soul that is not built upon this rock must be swept away, and all the other refuges and hiding-places shall be laid in ruins for ever.

The great God will also strictly inquire who is founded upon this rock, and who not. He will critically try the temple of his church, like a workman, with line and plummet; he will discover all irregularities and useless appendages. And, in consequence of this examination, the storms and torrents of divine indignation shall sweep away and

overwhelm all that are not built upon this foundation, and that are not compacted into this building.

These remarks contain the general meaning of our text : but it is necessary I should be more particular.

Brethren, our nature, our circumstances, and the important prospects before us, are such, that it is high time for us to look about us for some sure foundation upon which to build our happiness. The fabric must endure long, for our souls will exist for ever ; and their eagerness for happiness will continue vehement for ever. The fabric must rise high ; for the capacities of our souls will perpetually expand and enlarge, and a low happiness of an ordinary degree will not be equal to them. The fabric must be strong and impregnable, proof against all the storms that may beat upon it ; for many are the tempests that will rise upon us ; and upon this guilty world in general. Losses, bereavements, sicknesses, and a thousand calamities that I cannot name, may yet try us. The enemy may break in with the rapidity of a flood, and we, with our earthly all, may be overwhelmed. Death will certainly attack us all ; and that must be a strong building indeed which the king of terrors will not be able to demolish. Besides, when all the purposes of divine love in our world shall be accomplished, an almighty tempest of divine indignation shall break upon it, and sweep away all that it contains ; and blend cities, kingdoms, plains, and mountains, seas and dry land, kings and beggars, in one vast heap of promiscuous ruin. Or, to diversify the metaphor, according to the emphatical variety in my text, the fiery deluge of divine vengeance, which has been gathering and swelling for thousands of years, but has been, as it were, restrained and kept within bounds by divine patience, shall then rise so high as to burst through all restraints, and overwhelm the guilty globe, and turn it into a universal ocean of liquid fire. This resistless torrent shall sweep away all the refuges of lies, and them that trusted in them, into the gulf of remediless destruction. We, my brethren, shall be concerned in this universal catastrophe of nature ; and where shall we find a support to bear us up in this tremendous day ? Where shall we find a rock to build upon, that we may be able to stand the shock, and remain safe and unmoved in the wreck of dissolving worlds ? What can support the fabric when this vast machine of nature, formed with so much skill and strength by the hands of a divine Architect, shall be broken up and fall to pieces ? Now is the time for us to look out ; it will be too late when all

created supports are swept away, and this solid globe itself is dissolved beneath our feet into a sea of fire. Now, now is the time for you to provide. And where will you look? Whither will you turn? This earth and all its riches, honours, and pleasures, will prove but a quicksand in that day. Your friends and relations, were they ever so great or powerful, can then afford you no support. If they can but find refuge for themselves, that will be all; therefore, bethink yourselves once more, where shall you find a rock on which you may build a happiness that will stand the shock in that day?

If you are anxious and perplexed, I need only point you to my text for relief. "Behold," says the Lord God, "behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." Let me expatiate a little upon the properties of this foundation.

1. It is a stone: a stone for solidity, stability, and durability. "Every thing else," says the excellent Hervey, in his 'Theron and Aspasio,' "is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain shadow, honour an empty breath, pleasure a delusive dream, our own righteousness a spider's web. If on these we rely, disappointment must ensue, and shame be inevitable. Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ, can stably support our spiritual interests, and realize our expectations of the true happiness." And, blessed be God! he is sufficient for this purpose. Is a stone firm and solid? so is Jesus Christ. His power is almighty, able to support the meanest of his people that build their hopes on him, and to render them proof against all the attacks of earth and hell. His righteousness is infinitely perfect, equal to the highest demands of the divine law, and therefore a firm, immovable ground of trust. We may safely venture the weight of our eternal all upon this rock; it will stand for ever, without giving way under the heaviest pressure; without being broken by the most violent shock. Let thousands, let millions, with all the mountainous weight of guilt upon them, build upon this foundation, and they shall never be moved. Is a stone durable and lasting? so is Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, his strength an everlasting strength, and himself the everlasting Father. He liveth for ever to make intercession for his people, and therefore he is able to save to the uttermost, to the uttermost point of duration, all

that come unto God by him. Here is a stone that can never moulder away by the waste of all-consuming time. Parian marble, and even the flinty rocks decay : the firm foundations, the stately columns, the majestic buildings of Nineveh, Babylon, and Persepolis, and all the magnificent structures of antiquity, though formed of the most durable stone, and promising immortality, are now shattered into ten thousand fragments, or lying in ruinous heaps. But here is a foundation for immortal souls, immortal as themselves ; a foundation that now stands as firm under Adam, Abel, and Abraham, as at the first moment they ventured their dependence upon it ; a foundation that will remain the same to all eternity. Therefore it deserves the next character given to it, namely,

2. A tried stone. "Tried," says the same amiable writer, "in the days of his humanity by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions ; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more shining and illustrious by the fiery scrutiny." His obedience was tried ; and it appeared upon trial, that it was perfect and universal. His meekness was tried by the abusive treatment he met with from men. His patience and resignation to the divine will were tried, when the bitter cup of the wrath of God was put into his hand, and when the absence of his Father extorted that bitter cry from him, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me !" Matt. xxvii. 46. His love to his Father, and his zeal for his honour were tried, and they were found an unquenchable flame, that glowed without once languishing through the whole of his life. His love to men—to sinners—to enemies—was tried ; tried to the uttermost : it was put to the trial whether his own life or theirs was most dear to him ; whether he would rather see his enemies perish by the sword of justice, or that himself should feel the agonies of a cross. This was a trial indeed ; and you know how it issued. The severity of the trial did but render his love to us the more illustrious. In short, this stone was thoroughly tried by God and man, and it still remained firm without a flaw.

Jesus has also been tried in the capacity of a Saviour, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures, who have always found him perfectly able, and as perfectly willing to expiate the most enormous guilt ; to deliver from the most inveterate corruptions ; and to "save to the very uttermost all that come unto God through him." Ten thousand times ten thousand have built their hopes upon this

stone, and it has never failed so much as one of them. Manasseh and Paul, who had been bloody persecutors, Mary Magdalene who had been possessed of seven devils, and thousands more who were sinners of the most atrocious character, have ventured upon this rock with all their load of sin upon them, and found it able to sustain them. This stone is the foundation of that living temple the church, which has been now building for near six thousand years, and the top of which already reaches the highest heaven. All the millions of saints from Adam to this day, both those in heaven and those on earth, are living stones built upon this foundation-stone; this supports the weight of all. And this trial may encourage all others to build upon it; for it is amply sufficient to bear them all.

But I must further observe, that a new translation of this sentence, still nearer to the original, will give a new and important view of the sense of it. Instead of "a tried stone," it may be rendered "a stone of trial;" or, "a trying stone:" that is, this is the true touchstone of men's characters. It is this that, above all other things, discovers what they really are, whether good or bad men, whether heirs of heaven or hell. Only propose Jesus Christ to them as a Saviour, and according as they receive or reject him, you may know their true character, and their everlasting doom. If with eager hearts they spring forward and embrace him as a Saviour, they are true subjects to the King of heaven; they give the highest, the last, the most decisive proof of their subjection to his authority. That men should submit to Jesus Christ as a Saviour, is not a single command of God, but it is the drift, the scope, the substance of the whole law and gospel; it is the grand capital precept; it is a kind of universal command that runs through all the dispensations of heaven towards the sons of men. And therefore, while men refuse to submit to this command, they are guilty of a kind of universal disobedience: and it is in vain for them to pretend to have a real regard to God and his authority in any one instance whatsoever. If they obey God sincerely in falling in with this command, they will obey him in every thing; but if they will not obey him in this, they will truly obey him in nothing. Hence it is that good works are the inseparable fruits of faith in Christ, and that unbelief is the root of all evil. Submission to Christ is also the most effectual trial, whether the corrupt dispositions of the heart, whether the innate enmity to God, pride, stubbornness, &c. be thoroughly subdued. If a man is

once made so dutiful, so humble, so pliable, as to submit to this humbling, mortifying method of salvation through Jesus Christ, it shows that divine grace has obtained an entire victory over him, and that now the rebel is so subdued that he will be obedient in any thing. There is nothing in the whole law or gospel to which the hearts of sinners are so averse, as this method of salvation ; and therefore, when they are subdued to this, and made willing captives of the cross of Christ, we may be sure they have surrendered themselves to universal obedience.

This text has made strange discoveries in the world in every age. This touchstone has shown many glittering virtues to be but dross. The Pharisees and scribes had a high character among the Jews for piety, till this trying stone was applied to them, and then it appeared what they were ; then it was proved that they were the most inveterate enemies of God upon earth. These were the builders that rejected this stone and would not build upon it. They rather chose to build upon the sandy foundation of their own righteousness. Nay, instead of making Christ the foundation of their hopes, they made him " a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," Rom. ix. 32, 33. 1 Pet. ii. 8 ; and they stumbled and fell into destruction. " Christ crucified," says the apostle, " is to the Jews a stumbling-block," 1 Cor. i. 23. This test made strange discoveries also in the heathen world. Many of the sages of Greece and Rome had a high reputation for wisdom and virtue ; they gloried in it themselves, and they were admired and celebrated by the populace. But when this stone was pointed out to them as the only foundation of their hopes, they rejected it with proud disdain, and thought it much more safe to depend upon their own virtue and merit, than upon the virtue and merit of one that was crucified like a malefactor. And thus it appeared they were not truly good and virtuous. Let this touchstone be applied likewise to the men of this generation, and it will discover a great many counterfeits. You will find some who have an amiable, ingratiating conduct, who are temperate, just, charitable, and shine with the appearance of many virtues. You will find others who are very punctual in the duties of religion ; they are frequent in prayer, and strict attendants upon all the solemnities of divine worship ; all this looks well. But tell them that all this is no sufficient ground for their hopes of the divine acceptance ; nay, that they must renounce all this in point of dependence, as having no merit at all ; and that they must, as helpless, guilty, self-

condemned sinners, place their trust only in Jesus Christ; and they then begin to show their pride: then their hearts rise against this mortifying doctrine, and perhaps against him that inculcates it. They cannot bear that all their imaginary merit should have such contempt cast upon it. They will own indeed, as others around them do, that Christ is the only Saviour; but their real dependence is at bottom upon some supposed goodness in themselves. And thus they discover that all their righteousness is but the proud self-righteousness of a Pharisee, or the self-confident virtue of a stoic philosopher, and not the humble religion or genuine sterling virtue of a true Christian. Thus the reception which men give to Jesus Christ is the grand criterion of their character. And this is agreeable to the prophecy of good old Simeon concerning him; "Behold this child," says he, "is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," Luke ii. 34, 35. The secret thoughts, reasonings, and dispositions of many hearts, that were before unsuspected, are revealed by this trial. And I wish it may not make very ungrateful discoveries among you.

As this is a trying stone with regard to men's present characters, so it will be also as to their final doom and everlasting state. All that are built upon this foundation, however frail and tottering in themselves, shall grow up into a glorious impregnable temple, and stand firm when the frame of nature is dissolved. But all that are not built upon this foundation, however strong or well established in their own conceit, or however high they raise the fabric of their hopes, shall be demolished, and laid in ruins for ever. The one "may be likened," says Christ, "unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock." And the other may be "likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it." Matt. vii. 24—27. What a confounding fall will this be to those that have built a towering Babel of hopes, that reaches to heaven! But,

3. This is a precious stone; "more precious than rubies," to borrow the words of Mr. Hervey, "the pearl of great price, and the desire of all nations—precious with regard to the divine dignity of his person, and the unequalled excel-

lency of his mediatorial offices. In these and in all respects he is greater than Jonah, wiser than Solomon, fairer than the children of men, chiefest among ten thousand, and to the awakened sinner or enlightened believer, altogether lovely."

He is precious in himself, as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the sum total of all divine excellencies, and as clothed with all the virtues of a perfect man. In short, all moral excellencies, divine and human, created and uncreated, centre in him, and render him infinitely precious and valuable. He is precious to his Father; his "beloved Son in whom he is well pleased;" his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. He is precious to angels. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," is their eternal song. He is dear to all good men in all ages. "To you, therefore, that believe, he is precious," says Peter, 1 Peter ii. 7. How precious are his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness to the guilty self-condemned soul! How precious is his sanctifying grace to the soul heavy laden with sin, and groaning under the body of death! How precious the assistance of his almighty arm to his poor soldiers in the spiritual warfare! How precious the light of his instructions to the benighted wandering mind! How sweet the words of his mouth! sweeter than honey from the honeycomb. How precious the light of his smiling countenance, and the sensations of his love to the desponding, sinking soul! How precious that eternal salvation which he imparts, and how precious the price he paid for it! "not corruptible things, such as silver and gold," says Peter, "but his own precious blood," 1 Peter i. 18, 19. In short, he is altogether lovely, altogether precious. Diamonds and pearls, and all the precious stones in the universe, cannot represent his worth. O that a thoughtless world did but know how precious he is! Surely they would then say to each of his friends, "Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?" I enlarge upon this article with the more pleasure, as I doubt not, but the experience of several among you can affix your Amen to what I say, and to much more. I am now but complying with the request of one of my friends, at the distance of nearly four thousand miles, Mr. Benjamin Forfitt, of London, who writes to me thus:—"Dear sir, recommend Him to poor sinners, recommend Him to poor believers, as a most wonderful Saviour and Redeemer; abundantly able to deliver them from all that hell and sin can do to destroy them. O that his divine excellencies and worth could be set forth! Surely the most abandoned sinners would fall before him

with ravishment and wonder." These are sterling thoughts concerning this precious stone, my brethren, and I hope the same thoughts are to be found among you. O that they were universal among us, and among all the sons of men!

4. This stone is a sure foundation. "Such," says Mr. Hervey, "as no pressure can shake; equal, more than equal, to every weight; even to sin, the heaviest load in the world. The rock of ages, such as never has failed, never will fail, those humble penitents, who cast their burden upon the Lord Redeemer; who roll all their guilt, and fix their whole hopes, upon this immovable basis." The foundation is sure, because it is of divine appointment. "Behold," says the Lord God, who has authority to make the appointment, "behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." It is also sure, because of the extent of his power, the perfection of his righteousness, and the eternity of his existence. But these I have already touched upon. Indeed his excellencies are so sweetly blended and complicated, like the colours of the rainbow, that it is hard to describe one of them, without running into another.

The author, whom I have repeatedly quoted, thinks the words may be otherwise rendered: "A foundation! a foundation! There is," says he, "a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence thus understood: it speaks the language of agreeable surprise and exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want; that which multitudes seek and find not; it is here! It is here! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity."

5. This is a corner-stone. "It not only," says Mr. Hervey, "sustains, but unites the edifice: incorporating both Jews and Gentiles, believers of various languages and manifold denominations, here in one harmonious bond of brotherly love; hereafter in one common participation of eternal joy." To this purpose, and in this style, speaks the apostle: "He is our peace, who hath made both," that is, both Jews and Gentiles, "one," one regular, compact, magnificent superstructure, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord; in whom you [Gentiles] also are builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit." Ephes. ii. 14, 20, 22. Materials for this sacred temple are collected from thrones

and cottages, from bond and free, from Jews and Gentiles, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; but notwithstanding these distinctions, they are all united in this corner-stone; all harmoniously compacted, for so the original word means, into one regular magnificent temple, where the God of heaven delights to dwell.

Jesus Christ may also be called a corner-stone, to signify his peculiar importance in this spiritual building. Hence he is elsewhere repeatedly called the chief corner-stone, and the head of the corner, Matt. xxi. 42. Psalm cxviii, 22. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17. Acts iv. 11. 1 Pet. ii. 7. Ephes. ii. 20. We are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," in a subordinate sense; but "Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone." He has the most important place in the building. It is he that holds up and connects all. Apostles, prophets, and all, are but sinking sand without him. Their righteousness, their strength, are nothing without him. On him all their doctrines depend, in him they all terminate, and from him they derive all their efficacy. Take away this corner-stone, and immediately the saints in heaven fall from their thrones; and the saints upon earth that are gradually rising heavenward, sink for ever. Take away this corner-stone, and this glorious living temple, that has been building for so many ages, breaks to pieces, and covers heaven and earth with its ruins.

Having thus illustrated the particular properties of this stone, I shall take notice of this general propriety of it, that it is a foundation. So it is repeatedly called in my text. "It is laid in Zion as a foundation:" it is a sure foundation. It must be the foundation, and have the principal place in the spiritual building, or none at all. "No other foundation," says Paul, "can any man lay, than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ." And he must lie at the bottom of all, or the superstructure cannot stand. To join our own righteousness with his in our justification, is to form a foundation of solid stone, and hay, straw, and stubble, blended together. To make our own merit the ground of our claim to his righteousness; that is, to hope that God will save us for Christ's sake, because we are so good as to deserve some favour at least for our own sakes, this is to lay a foundation of stone upon a quicksand. The stone would have stood, had it been in its proper place, that is, at the bottom of all; but when it is founded upon the sand, must give way, and all the superstructure must fall. This is the grand fundamental mistake of multitudes in the Chris-

tian world. They all own that Christ is the only Saviour ; but then the ground of their expecting salvation through him, is not his righteousness, but their own. Their own worthless works, which their ignorance and vanity call good, lie at the bottom of all their hopes, as the first foundation ; and Christ's righteousness is rather a part of the superstructure, than the entire foundation. This is *the refuge of lies*, the delusive hiding-place which multitudes are building all their lives with a great deal of pains ; and, when they think themselves provided with a strong everlasting mansion, suddenly they feel themselves swept away into destruction by the overwhelming torrent of divine indignation.

Here, brethren, let us pause awhile, and turn our attention to a question that I hope you have anticipated. "Am I a living stone built upon this foundation ? Are all my hopes of acceptance with God and eternal happiness founded upon this rock ?" Are you not desirous to make this important discovery ? to make it now while you have time ? if you have made a mistake, to correct it by pulling down the old building and beginning a new one on the right foundation ? Have you no anxiety about this ? If not, I must tell you, you care not for the God that made you, or the Saviour that bought you with his blood : heaven and hell are but trifles to you, and you are indifferent which should be your eternal lot. You have not the sensibility of a man with regard to pleasure and pain, but the stupidity of a brute, or rather of a senseless stone ; and, if you continue thus stupidly careless about eternal things, you shall for ever be cut off from the rewards of pious diligence, and feel the dreadful doom of the slothful servant. Brethren, can you be indifferent in a matter of such infinite consequence ? Let me remind you that a dreadful hurricane is gathering over this guilty world, which will burst upon you, and sweep you away, unless you be founded upon the Rock of ages. Think of the last part of my text ; "the hail shall sweep away the refuge, or hope, of lies, the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." You may be parts of the outward court of this spiritual building ; I mean, you may be members of the visible church : but that is only a scaffold to the sacred temple ; and, when this is finished, that shall be pulled down. Remember, this building will be critically inspected : the great Architect "will lay righteousness to the line, and judgment to the plummet ;" and if you do not stand that test, you will be demolished as useless appendages or in-

cumbrances, and you never can be built up again; the temple of God will then be complete, and no new stones shall be added to it for ever. Therefore now is the time to discover fundamental errors, and correct them. Discover them you can and will in the eternal world; but, O, it will then be too late to correct them!

Would you then know, whether you are really built upon this sure foundation? If so, I shall willingly assist you to make the trial. And for this purpose I solemnly propose a few questions to your consciences in the sight of God.

1. Have you ever seen the utter insufficiency of every other foundation? You will never build upon Christ, while you can build any where else with hopes of safety. If you have ever fled to him as a hiding place, you have seen it was your last refuge. And have all your false hopes, all your refuges of lies been swept away? Have you seen that honours, riches, pleasures, and all the world, were but breaking bubbles? Have you been sensible that your own righteousness was a rotten foundation, and that you were just ready to sink every moment under the burden of your sins, and to be swept away by the torrent of divine vengeance? Like a sinking man, you have been ready to catch at every twig or straw for support; but were you obliged at length, with Peter, to turn to Christ and cry out, "Help, Lord, I perish?" Have you let go every other hold, and taken fast hold of him as the only support? Have you given up all other grounds of hope, and, as poor, guilty, perishing, helpless creatures, placed your whole dependence upon this foundation? If you can honestly give a satisfactory answer to these inquiries, it looks encouraging: but, if not, you may be sure you are building upon some sandy foundation; you are lurking in some refuge of lies, and you must be overwhelmed at last in inevitable ruin.

2. Have you ever been sensible of the preciousness, the excellency, and the stability of this divine foundation? If you have ever built upon Christ, it has been at once an act of the last necessity, and of the most free choice. O how precious did this stone appear to you! like the loadstone, it had a strong attraction upon you, and you were effectually drawn to it. You need go no further than your own hearts to find the truth of what I have said of the preciousness of Christ; the preciousness of his strength, his righteousness, and every thing in him. "To you that believe, he is precious," 1 Peter ii. 7. This is the assertion of an apostle concerning all believers, without exception. And shall I

conclude this is your real sentiment concerning Christ? Shall I conclude it, brethren? O! shall I allow myself to be so happy? Does your conscience tell you there is ground for your saying that Christ is precious to you? Alas! is it not quite the reverse with many of you?

3. Where is your habitual dependence? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? or is it upon something else? Do you not feel the need of strength, of spiritual life, of pardon and righteousness, and eternal life? Certainly, if you know yourselves, you feel the need of these things. And upon whom do you depend for them? Is it upon Jesus Christ alone? Is it habitual, and as it were, natural to you since you first ventured upon this foundation, to rest there, sensible that you have always need of this support, and that every other foundation is but sinking sand? Brethren, what does conscience reply to these questions?

4. Have you been formed into proper stones for this spiritual temple? Has God hewn you, may I so speak, by his word, and broken off whatever was rugged, irregular, and unfit to be compacted into the building? Has he shaped and polished your souls for a place in it? Do you feel this divine Architect daily carrying on this work in you, polishing you more and more into a resemblance to Christ? Or are you still the same rough, irregular, unpolished pieces, with human nature unsanctified in its present degenerate state? Then you may be sure you are not built upon this foundation.

I think I may pronounce these few queries fully decisive in this case. And what discoveries do they now make among you? Where now appears to be the foundation of your hope? Have not some of you rejected the chief corner-stone, which God has appointed, and built upon a quicksand? If so, even a friendly tongue cannot but denounce some terrible things upon you.

While you are not founded upon Christ, you shall, you must, unavoidably sink for ever. There is nothing that can support you. Build your hopes ever so high, the fabric will fall, and bury you in its ruins. Nay, this only foundation of hope and happiness will be to you a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, the occasion of your more aggravated guilt, and more dreadful destruction. There are a few texts of Scripture which I would ring like peals of alarming thunder in your ears. "The same Lord of hosts, who shall be for a sanctuary to his people, shall be for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, for a gin and a snare; and many shall stumble and fall, and be broken,

and snared, and taken," Isa. viii. 14, 15. "Unto you that believe," says Peter, "he is precious; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word," 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. If this stone be not made by you the foundation of your hopes, it will fall upon you, and crush you to pieces. Remember the declaration of Christ himself, "Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken;" that is, whosoever shall reject him while in a humble form in the days of his flesh, shall perish, "but on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder;" that is, whosoever shall reject him in his state of exaltation, shall perish in a still more terrible manner. And will not all these alarming considerations have weight with you to persuade you to make him your only foundation!

If you have already made him so, then be assured you are safe and immovable for ever. Let storms of private or public calamity rise and beat upon you; let your fears and doubts rise to ever so high a deluge; let temptations make ever so severe attacks upon you, still the foundation on which you stand, abides firm and unshaken. Nay, let all nature go to wreck, and seas and land, and heaven and earth, be blended together, still this foundation stands firm, and the living temple built upon it, will remain immovable for ever. You that believe, need not make haste; you need not be struck into consternation upon the appearance of danger, nor fly to unlawful means of deliverance; your all is safe, and therefore you may be serene and calm. Is the burden of your guilt intolerable, and are you ready to sink under it? Or, are you sinking under a load of sorrow? Whatever be the burden, cast it upon the Lord, and he will sustain you. This foundation is able to bear you up, however great the pressure. Come ye that are weary and heavy-laden, come, and build your hopes, and place your rest here. O! what joyful tidings are these! I hope they will prove a word in season to some soul that is weary.

What now remains but that I should more explicitly point out this precious stone to you all, by illustrating the emphatical word *behold*, prefixed to the text.

Behold, ye poor sinking souls! behold, with wonder and gratitude! here is a sure foundation for you; cast your whole weight, venture your eternal all upon it, and it will support you. Say no more, "Alas! I must sink for ever under this mountain of guilt;" but turn to Jesus with sinking Peter, and cry, "Lord, save me; I perish;" and he

will bear you up. Yes, whatever storms may blow, whatever convulsions may shake the world, you are safe.

Behold, ye joyful believers! See here the foundation of all your joys and hopes. Do you stand firm like mount Zion? See here is the rock that supports you. Gratefully acknowledge it, and inscribe this precious stone with your praises. Point it out to others as the only ground of hope for perishing souls.

Behold, ye wretched self-righteous Pharisees, the only rock on which you must build, if you expect to stand! Your proud, self-confident virtue, your boasted philosophic morality, is but a loose tottering foundation. Virtue and morality are necessary to complete and adorn the superstructure; but when they are laid at the bottom of all, they will prove but a quicksand.

“Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!” Perish you must, if you set at nought this precious stone. To you this only foundation is like to prove a “stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.” To you the nature of things is inverted; the only ground of hope will heighten your despair, and the Saviour of men will be your destroyer.

Behold, ye glorious angels! Behold the firm foundation divine love has laid for the salvation of guilty worms. It is as firm as that on which you stand. Are the affairs of mortals beneath your notice? No, we are concerned with Jesus too, who is also your head; and our connexion with him must give us an importance in your view. Therefore, join with us in celebrating the praises of this foundation. This precious stone appears to you in all its splendours: its brilliancy dazzles your admiring eyes. We also admire it as far as we know it; but to us it is like a foundation laid deep under ground, that supports us though we see it not. When we shall be placed in your advantageous situation, the heights of the heavenly Zion, where it shall appear full to our view, it will be the object of our delightful contemplation for ever and ever.

THE

FOUNDATION STONE,

BY THE REV. ROBERT HALL.

It is peculiarly necessary that we mark the majesty of that great and glorious Being who laid the foundation. "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious." "Behold *the Lamb of God,*" &c.

This stone is indeed a *tried* stone; it was tried before it was laid as the foundation. Jesus Christ was amply tried by temptations, hunger, pain, and thirst; by the mocking of his enemies, the desertion of his friends, and by the combined powers of darkness; and his holiness sustained all. He went through the whole scene of his sufferings, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and made an entrance into glory. He conquered all the powers of darkness; he rolled away the stone that lay at the sepulchre of all our hopes; he made peace by the blood of his cross, and proclaimed it "to them that were afar off, and to them that were near." He triumphed most of all upon the cross, which removed all the clouds from the brow of the majesty of heaven. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And he was "a precious corner-stone." He was "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." He was the solace of his heart. "He was with Him as one brought up by Him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before Him." God had but one son, and "he gave *him* up for us all."

And, it is added, "*a sure foundation.*" This is the highest and most important quality of a foundation. What an edifice does this sure foundation sustain! It is sufficient to support the sinking hopes of the universe! It is sufficient to support the hopes of his creatures in the prospect of death and eternal judgment. Many, when Peter preached his sermon on the day of Pentecost, were pricked to the heart; they were not sitting at their ease, as many of you are; but when the three thousand were converted, and said, "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" he was then found a sure foundation. They that put their trust in *Him* were not confounded. They beheld the great God arrayed be-

fore them, as a just and sin-avenging God; but, no sooner had they a sight of the Saviour, than their consciences were purified, and their hearts comforted. The next that we hear of them was, that they received the word, and “continued steadfast in the apostles’ doctrine, and breaking of bread, and in prayers.” They now “counted all things as dross, “compared with Christ and him crucified. And since that time, for eighteen hundred years, this foundation has been proved. The blessed Redeemer has been exhibited in all parts of the world, and thousands have been added to *him* and built *upon him*. But many have perished on all *sides* of this foundation. They did not lay their hopes upon it; they were not humbled sufficiently to come to the Saviour. It is not coming the nearest to it that will save us.—“Ye will not come to *me* that ye might have life,” said the Saviour; and thus we are compelled to say to our hearers, that *they* will not come to him for salvation. But never do we find any that are yielding themselves up to the Saviour, but they have peace in believing, and a lively hope of eternal glory. Death changes his features: and as eternity draws near, things present are absorbed in the prospect of things to come, and the interests of time lose themselves in those of eternity. Were millions and millions of worlds thus to place their trust in this Saviour, he would be a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of them all. He is a *sure* foundation—“chosen of God, and precious.”

And what, my brethren, do you intend to make of this foundation? If you do not make *any* account of it, do not imagine that you are in safety: remember, that to them who believe on him, he is a sure foundation; but, to those who believe not, he is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. He is too great an object to be passed: you *must come* into collision somewhere or other. If you neglect this great salvation, you cannot escape. And for *Him* to be the savour of death unto death,—O! what an awful end! And what a strange thing it is to extract *damnation* from the source of *salvation*! Yet such is the consequence of rejecting the Saviour.

And what, my friends, do you intend to do *with yourselves* if you reject the Saviour? You will be called to account. Our blessed Saviour, when he exhorted his followers not to labour for the meat that perished, but for that which endured unto eternal life;—and they said, “Lord, evermore give us this bread; said, I am the bread of life,” &c. and he added, “This is the work of God, that ye

believe on him whom he hath sent." This work demands your *immediate* attention. Sinner, hast thou fled to Christ? Has the blood of Christ passed upon thy conscience? If *not*, commit not thyself to rest this night, give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids, till thou hast found favour with God. "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." God is the person that proposed it; and you can never be saved from the ruins of the fall, until you are united to the life-giving Saviour, according to the directions of the gospel.

Let us all accept the present occasion, and let us secure, let us seize the present moment. Let us recollect the greatness of the object presented to us. It is salvation! Do you ask why we are so earnest in pressing you to build on this foundation? It is the foundation of eternal hopes—of escape from the wrath to come. It is the salvation of the immortal soul that is concerned in this foundation. Nothing can hurt us, living or dying, compared with the neglect of Christ: fleeing to any self-dependence, trusting to any thing beside Him, we are undone.

If these are our foundation instead of Christ, we shall be confounded for ever. It is only upon the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, that we can stand secure; and of this he has said, "HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL NEVER BE CONFOUNDED."—*Amen.*

CHRIST IS ALL.

DESPAIRING sinner! thou lookest on thy right hand and on thy left, saying, "Who will show me any good?" Thou art weighing all thy duties and professions to patch up a righteousness to save thee. Look at Christ now; look to him and be saved, all the ends of the earth. (Isa. xlv. 22.) There is none else. *He* is a Saviour, and there is none besides him, (ver. 21.) Look any where else, and thou art undone. God will look at nothing but Christ; and thou must look at nothing else. Christ is lifted up on high, as the brazen serpent in the wilderness, that sinners at the end of the earth—the greatest distance, may see him and live. (John iii. 14, 15.) The least sight of him will be saving; the least touch healing to thee. And God intends thou shouldst look on him; for he hath set him upon a high throne of glory, in the open view of all poor sinners. Thou hast infinite reason to look on him; no reason at all to look away from him. He is meek and lowly in heart. (Matt. xi. 29.) He will do that himself which he requires of his creatures; *viz.* bear with infirmities. (Rom. xv. 1.) No pleasing himself; no standing upon the points of law. (ver. 2.) He will restore with the spirit of meekness, (Gal. vi. 1.) and bear thy burdens. (ver. 2.) He will forgive not only seven times, but seventy times seven. (Matt. xviii. 21, 22.) It put the faith of the apostle to a trial to believe this. (Luke xvii. 4, 5.) Because we are hard to forgive, we think Christ is so.

We apprehend sin too great to be pardoned. We think Christ doth so, and measure infinite love with our line, infinite merits with our sins, which is the greatest pride and blasphemy. (Psal. ciii. 11, 12. Isa. xl. 15.) Hear what he saith: "I have found a ransom." (Job. xxxiii. 24.) "In him I am well pleased." (Matt. iii. 17.) God will have nothing else. Nothing else will do thee good, or satisfy conscience, but Christ who satisfied the Father. God doth all upon the account of Christ. Thy deserts are rejection, wrath, hell. Christ's deserts are acceptance, pardon, life. He will not only show thee the one, but he will give thee the other. It is Christ's own glory and happiness to pardon.

Consider: whilst Christ was upon the earth, he was more among publicans and sinners than *scribes* and *pharisees*, his professed adversaries. It is not, as thou imaginest, that his state in glory makes him neglectful, scornful to poor sinners. No; he hath the same heart now in heaven. He

is God and changeth not. He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." (John i. 29.) He went through all thy temptations, dejections, sorrows, desertions, rejections, (Matt. iv. 3—12, and 26. Mark xv. 34. Luke xxii. 44. Matt. xxvi. 38.) He hath drunk the bitterest of the cup, and left thee the sweet; the condemnation is out. Christ drank up all the Father's wrath at one draught; and nothing but salvation is left for thee. Thou sayest, I cannot believe, I cannot repent;—Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. (Acts v. 31.) Hast thou nothing but sin and misery? Go to Christ with all thy impenitency and unbelief, to get faith and repentance from him; that is glorious. Tell Christ, "Lord, I have brought no righteousness, no grace to be accepted in, or justified by; I am come for thine and must have it." We would be bringing to Christ, and that must not be. Not a penny of nature's highest improvements will pass in heaven. Grace will not stand with works. (Tit. iii. 5. Rom. xi. 6.) That is a terrible point to nature, which cannot think of being stripped of all, not having a rag of duty or righteousness left to look at.

To say in compliment, "I am a sinner," is easy; but to pray with the publican, indeed, "God, be merciful unto me a sinner," is the hardest prayer in the world. It is easy to say, "I believe in Christ." But to see Christ full of grace and truth, "of whose fulness thou mayest receive grace for grace," that is saving. It is easy to profess Christ with the mouth. But to confess him with the heart, as Peter did, "to be the Christ, the Son of the living God," the alone Mediator, that is above flesh and blood. Many call Christ *Saviour*; few know him to be so. To see grace and salvation in Christ is the greatest sight in the world. Sights will cause applications. Men may be ashamed to think, in the midst of so much profession, they have known so little of the blood of Christ, which is the main thing of the gospel. A Christless, formal profession is the blackest sight, next to hell. Thou mayest have many good things; and yet one thing may be wanting, that may make thee go away sorrowful from Christ. Thou hast never sold all that thou hast, never parted with all thine own righteousness, &c. Thou mayest be high in duty, and yet a perfect enemy and adversary to Christ in every prayer, in every ordinance.

(9)

A BRIEF
EXPOSITION AND VINDICATION
OF THE
DOCTRINE OF
THE DIVINE DECREES,
AS TAUGHT IN THE ASSEMBLY'S LARGER CATECHISM.

BY THE

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“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”—2 Tim. i. 8, 9.

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DIVINE DECREES.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE DECREES STATED AND PROVED.

Quest. 12. "What are the decrees of God ?

Ans. God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.

Q. 13. What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men ?

A. God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory ; and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof, and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favour as he pleaseth) hath passed by, and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice."—The Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly.

The doctrine stated in the foregoing answers, has not only been violently contested, but most shamefully misrepresented and vilified ; and its advocates held up to the scorn and indignation of mankind !

Passing by the unjust and shocking caricatures of our system, by individual preachers and local exhorters, I will mention a few of the statements, which have been widely circulated, in the Tracts published by the "General Tract Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church," under the care and control of the General Conference.

In these official tracts, we are charged with believing, (I quote their express language,) "that God by an eternal and unchangeable decree, hath predestinated to eternal dam-

nation far the greater part of mankind, without any respect to their works ;"—“that God is the author of all sin, working wickedness in the wicked ;”—“that God has taken the work of the devil out of his hands and does it more effectually :—the devil tempts, God forces men to sin and to perish.” We are charged with representing our blessed Lord, “as a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity ; as mocking his helpless creatures ; as pretending the love which he had not ; as weeping crocodile’s tears, weeping over the prey which he himself had compelled to sin, and then doomed to destruction ;—as thus representing the most holy God as worse than the devil, more false, more cruel, and more unjust !”*

And even in their more elaborate and personally responsible works, their authors represent our system as teaching, That some men are born to be damned, without regard to their moral character, and by an arbitrary and unchangeable decree of their Creator !—That those who are elected must be saved, do what they may ; while those who are reprobated, must be damned, do what they will !—That men are not free agents, but mere machines ; laid under a physical necessity of sinning, and then damned for doing what they could not help !—That there is no provision for the salvation of the non-elect, and that the gospel only aggravates their eternal condemnation, without the possibility of doing them any saving good !—That our system either fosters the greatest presumption and tends to the grossest licentiousness, or else destroys all motive to effort and leads to the most gloomy despair ! Need I say, that we not only do not believe such blasphemous falsehoods, but we reject them with horror !

Further, not content with thus shamefully misrepresenting and vilifying our system, they have endeavoured to impugn our moral honesty, and thus to destroy our Christian standing and ministerial influence ! Finding that the public had discovered the gross discrepancy, between their published caricatures of our system, and the doctrines which we really believe and actually teach, instead of acknowledging their error and hastening to redress the wrong which they had so unjustly and wantonly inflicted, they issued another

* For these and other evidences of their gross misrepresentations of our doctrines, and violent hostility towards the Presbyterian Church, see Annan’s *Difficulties of Arminian Methodism*.

official tract, reiterating their former slanders, and expressly accusing us of deliberate dissimulation and wilful hypocrisy! This tract is called "Duplicity Exposed!" and you may judge of its character and spirit from its title!

In addition to these official and public attacks, many of that sect busy themselves in private, in vilifying our doctrines and in prejudicing the public against our ministry and churches:—representing the former as unconverted and useless, and the latter as cold, formal, and heartless! Yea, they not unfrequently intrude upon the members of our flocks—endeavour to render them disaffected with their present relations—and seek to proselyte them to their sect;—and if perchance they should succeed, in seducing any from Presbyterianism to Arminian Methodism, they appear to exult as much, as if they had converted a heathen, from his damning idolatry, to the faith and practice of the gospel!

Now, we can excuse much of their misrepresentation of our doctrinal system, on the ground of their intellectual weakness and want of education; but for such wholesale traduction of moral character, involving the Christian reputation of some three or four thousand accredited ministers of the gospel:—for such dishonourable attempts to impair our influence and to injure our churches, we can conceive of no apology.

In view of this systematic and wide-spread misrepresentation and defamation, is it any wonder that multitudes should be prejudiced against the doctrine of election? But if any such should peruse these pages, let me ask their patient and candid attention; and if they are not thoroughly convinced of the truth of the doctrine, they will at least cease to regard it with pious horror!

Here let me remind you, that the doctrines which we hold are no novelties; neither have their advocates been contemptible as to number, talent, learning, piety, or usefulness. To say nothing of the ancients:—these were the sentiments of all the great luminaries of the Reformation;—and for more than a century they continued to be held by nearly the whole Protestant world. Nor will the thousands of ministers and churches who still adhere to the doctrines of the Reformation, and as they believe, to the unchangeable truths of the gospel, suffer in comparison with their opponents, with respect either to intellectual vigour, sound learning, enlightened piety, or public usefulness. Surely sentiments so venerable for their antiquity—embraced by the clearest and

deepest thinkers the world has ever seen—and still held by multitudes whose ministerial and Christian character is beyond reproach, should not be repelled with prejudice, but examined with due respect and candour.

In the first Answer, the subject of God's decrees, in general, is stated or defined; and to this general proposition I would first direct your attention, viz:—

I. "God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time."

Now, observe, it is not said that God has pre-determined efficiently to produce and effect whatsoever comes to pass in time,—for that would indeed make God the author of sin, as well as of holiness. Hence in the succeeding answer, as also in other parts of our venerated Confession, our standards carefully distinguish, between the efficient, and the permissive decrees of God. All things that are the proper objects of his power and grace, He does efficiently or influentially produce, agreeably to his eternal and unchangeable purpose:—but all the moral evils which exist, are permitted, limited, and overruled, according to the same eternal and unchangeable will. Thus, in the Confession of Faith, chap. 3d, sec. 1st, it is said,—“God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”

That all things, in this sense, are fore-ordained, is indisputable, unless the prescience or fore-knowledge of God be denied;—the denial of which would not only be impious, but if carried out, would lead to blank and cheerless atheism!

The argument founded on the necessary prescience or fore-knowledge of God, is briefly this:—

There must have been a time when no creature existed, as God alone is from everlasting. Before creation, and from all eternity, all things that are possible, as well as all things that actually have or will come to pass in time, must have been perfectly known to God. He must, therefore, have known, what beings and events would, on the whole, be most for his own glory and the greatest good of the universe; and therefore, as an infinitely wise, benevolent, and

Almighty Being, he could not but have chosen or determined, that such beings and events, and such only, should come to pass in time.

To allege, that, although he foreknew what beings and events, would, on the whole, be best, and yet that he did neither prefer nor fore-ordain that they should be produced and permitted, would be to deny both his wisdom and benevolence, and to charge the infinite God with supreme folly and malevolence!

Or to say, that he foreknew what would, on the whole, be best, and would have preferred to have secured its existence and occurrence, but could not;—that He fore-saw good that was desirable, but had not power to effect it, —and evil, that was, on the whole, undesirable, but had not ability to prevent it, is to deny his omnipotence, and to charge the Almighty with impotence or weakness!

The conclusion is, therefore, to our minds irresistible, that if God be infinitely wise, benevolent, and powerful, and perfectly foreknew, what beings and events would, on the whole, be best, he must have chosen and ordained that they should exist, or be permitted to occur:—and that, consequently, every thing that does actually come to pass in time, has been eternally and unchangeably fore-ordained; and is either the effect of the divine efficiency, or the result of his predetermined permission.

These general principles are acknowledged by the great body of Arminians themselves; and indeed they could not be disputed with any consistency, except by deists, who deny the doctrine of divine Providence in toto, and maintain, absurdly, that all things come to pass by chance or hazard!

While, however, Arminians acknowledge these principles, in the general, as they relate to the creation and natural government of the universe—they violently, and as we think, unphilosophically, dispute their applicability to the free actions of moral agents and their future destiny as determined by them. That is, they profess to believe, as well as we, that all things and events are the result of the divine will—except the free or voluntary actions of moral beings.

But must not these also have been included, in either the efficient, or permissive, purposes of Jehovah? Must they not have been equally foreknown to God? And would he not have prevented their occurrence, as he indisputably might have done, if he had not, on the whole, preferred to

produce those which are good, and to permit those which are evil? For example, he wills into existence, beings possessed of certain faculties, and placed in certain circumstances, which beings, so situated, he foresees will give birth to certain actions; now, could he not have prevented their existence, and so have hindered their occurrence? "As, therefore, he chose that beings should exist, who, he certainly knew, would perform such actions; it is evident, that he also chose, upon the whole, the existence of the actions themselves." He may indeed have determined that their actions should be free, as in truth he has, and that, so far as they are evil, they should be, as they are, the effect of their own agency, and without any direct exertion of his; yet, as they must have been foreknown, and might have been prevented, they are wisely permitted by the Almighty according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will.

I will merely add, at present, that on this subject, we are not left to reason alone. It is an undeniable fact, that many of the free or voluntary actions of men, have not only been foreknown and fore-ordained, but actually predicted—some of them for centuries before they came to pass; as every reader of inspired prophecy must know.

The only possible way to evade the force of this argument is, to deny that the foreknowledge of God includes all the voluntary actions of moral agents! Accordingly, Dr. Adam Clarke, in his concluding observations on the 2d chapter of Acts, says—that God does not know all things! that there are some things which he does not choose to know! (As if he must not first know them before he can determine that he will not know them!) And thus, rather than confess that the voluntary actions of men are fore-ordained—which the doctor concedes they must be, if certainly foreknown, he impiously denies the perfect prescience or foreknowledge of Jehovah! May God prevent us from adopting a system, which can only be logically supported, and that in the judgment of one of its most learned and popular advocates, at the expense of an essential attribute of Deity!

With these brief remarks relative to the subject of fore-ordination in general, let us now proceed to consider, the special decree of God concerning men, or that part of the Answer which refers to the election of some to eternal life, and which is expressed in these words:—

II. "God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his

mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory ; and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof."

1. It is stated, that " God, by an eternal and immutable decree, hath chosen some men to eternal life."

The facts, that God has an elect or chosen people, and that none but they will be actually saved, are not and cannot be denied by Arminians themselves ; and therefore I do not deem it necessary to quote any of the numerous passages of Scripture in which those truths are expressly asserted. But our opponents deny that they are elected, by an " eternal and immutable" decree ; and allege that they are chosen in time and on the occasion of their actual conversion to God ; in other words, that every Christian is elected when he believes and obeys the gospel. Here then we are at issue ; and let the word of God decide between us. From many passages, I select the few following, and submit whether they are not entirely satisfactory and irresistibly conclusive :—

2 Tim. i. 8, 9—" Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner ; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God ; who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Again, Rom. viii. 29, 30—" For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

Once more, Ephes. i. 4—6—" According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

By these proofs we regard this point as conclusively settled—that Christians are not elected in time, but from all eternity ; but it may be still further illustrated and confirmed, by showing,

2. That the election of God's people unto eternal life, is

unconditional ; that is, “without any foresight of faith or good works, as conditions, or causes, moving God thereunto ;” but, as the Answer before us expresses it—“out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace.”

Here let me correct the uncandid and ungenerous misrepresentation of our opponents. They represent us as meaning by unconditional election, that God has predetermined to save a certain number, without any regard to the means that are necessary to qualify them for heaven ; and, consequently, that they who are elected will be saved, no matter how unbelieving or immoral ! Need I say, that we abhor such sentiments as much as our unjust accusers—and hold, as cordially and as fully as any, the absolute necessity of faith and good works in order to salvation ? But the real question at issue between us is, not whether faith and good works are requisite to salvation, but whether they are the cause, or the effect, of election ? They hold, that some are elected, because they believe and obey : we affirm, that some believe and obey, because they were elected. In other words, we maintain, that as none believe and obey the gospel, except as “God worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” the faith and obedience of any, must be the effect, and not the moving cause or condition, of their election unto life :—and this is all that we mean, by the much vilified, and to some, horrible term, unconditional election.

But let us appeal to the sacred Scriptures, whether election unto life be not an act of God’s free and sovereign grace : and as this is the most disputed point, you will allow me to be sufficiently full in my quotations.

John vi. 64, 65—“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

1 Cor. iv. 7—“For who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?”

Philip ii. 12, 13—“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

John x. 25—29—“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not : the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye

are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

Matt. xi. 25, 26—"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

John vi. 37—39—"All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

John vi. 43—45—"Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

John xii. 37—41—"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

John x. 16—"And other sheep I have, which are not of this [Jewish] fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Acts xiii. 48—"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

Ephes. i. 4, 5, 6, 9, 11—"According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we

should be holy and without blame before him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved : having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself : in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

Ephes. ii. 4—10—" But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ ; (by grace ye are saved ;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus : that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

2 Thess. ii. 13, 14—" But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth ; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Tim. i. 9—" Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

Rom. xi. 5—7—" Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works : otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace : otherwise work is no more work. What then ? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for : but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

Romans ix. 11—16, 19—21—" For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth ;) it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written,

Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shalt we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that will-eth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Now, judge ye, in view of these passages of Scripture, whether election unto life be unconditional, or conditional; whether it be of free unmerited grace, or of human works. In other words, whether God's people are elected in consequence of their anticipated faith and obedience, or whether, as we maintain, their faith and obedience are wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, agreeably to his eternal purpose, and out of his mere love and unmerited compassion. Men may, if they choose, rebel against this humbling truth; but, in doing so, they must contend, not so much against us, as against the inspired word and its holy and righteous Author!

I appeal to you, whether the statements of our standards are not in perfect accordance with those just quoted from the sacred writings. The truth is, they are little more than a literal transcript of their express language, as any one may see, by comparing the text of our Confession, with the scriptural proofs that are referred to at the bottom of each page. All we desire is, that our doctrine may be judged by the Bible, which is the only infallible rule of faith; and we again invite you, not only to ponder upon the passages just quoted, but to examine and study their connection; for we are persuaded that, if their spirit and scope are properly understood, the conviction will be irresistible, that the election and salvation of God's people, is from beginning to end, a work of free, sovereign, and unmerited mercy.

But although God was not moved in the election of his people by the foresight of their faith or good works, but chose them out of his mere love, yet, I remark,

3. In his sovereign and gracious purpose of election, all the means that are necessary to their salvation, are included, or were provided for. Hence, in the Answer before

us, it is said, that they are chosen, "in Christ," to eternal life, "and the means thereof."

Now you may judge with what justice we are charged with believing, that if a man be unconditionally elected, he must be saved, no matter whether he believes and obeys the gospel, or not! We believe no such thing. On the contrary, we maintain that the end includes the means:—or, in other words, that the purpose of election includes and implies, the actual provision, and the certain and effectual application, of all the means that are acknowledged to be necessary to entitle and prepare the elect for heaven.

In proof that such is our belief, I have already recited the language of our Catechism; let me quote in addition the express language of our Confession of Faith, chapter 3d, sect. 6th. "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purposé of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation.

Again, chap. 10th, sect. 1st.—"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."

Once more, chap. 13, sect. 1.—"They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are farther sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

In view of these quotations from our public standards, and many more, of similar import that might be made, I ask again, how can any accuse us of denying the necessity of personal holiness in order to salvation? Have they ever read our standards? And if so, are they too ignorant to understand the force of language? Or do they knowingly and for selfish purposes, misrepresent and vilify our doctrines? However this may be, surely every intelligent and candid reader must be convinced, that our belief is, not that some are elected to salvation without regard to the necessary means, but that all the means necessary are provided for in the purpose of God, and their certain and effectual application infallibly secured.

That the doctrine of our standards, on this point also, is in perfect accordance with the word of God, we might prove by almost innumerable references; but as all agree that faith and obedience are necessary to salvation, I will merely refer you to the passages which have been produced in proof of the other points, and in which this truth likewise is clearly taught.

Let us now proceed to consider, very briefly, the remaining part of the Answer, viz.

III. "And also according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth or withholdeth favour as he pleaseth) hath passed by, and foreordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice."

On this part of the subject little need be added in the way of proof:—because, if what has been said concerning the election of some unto life be true, what is here said of the non-elect, must follow as a matter of course. But as this part of our doctrinal system has been specially misrepresented and vilified, it is proper that I should give, before I conclude, a brief explanation.

Here, then, let me again remind you, that our standards clearly distinguish between the efficient or influential decrees of God, and those that are only permissive. All moral actions that are the objects of God's efficient decrees, must be in their nature good, as God is holy, and he is their efficient cause or Author: But all moral actions that are evil, and that are the objects therefore of his permissive decrees, are produced, not by God, but by the efficiency of free moral agents: and these evil actions he has pre-determined to permit, under proper limitations, and to over-

rule for his own most excellent glory. And having thus determined to permit the existence of moral evil, and foreseeing all the wickedness of the wicked, he determined to punish them for their voluntary sinfulness, to the praise of the glory of his justice.

You perceive then the great distinction between the decrees of election and reprobation. With respect to the former, God is considered as the efficient cause or author of all moral good : but with respect to the latter, he is considered as simply permitting, or not preventing the production of moral evil, produced by the efficiency of free and therefore responsible moral agents. The decree of election unto life, is unconditional and is an act of God's free grace ; whereas foreordination unto death, is conditional and is an act of perfect justice. In other words, while eternal life is the free, unmerited gift of God ; eternal death is the wages or just desert of sin.

If we held that God has decreed moral evil, in the same sense that he has decreed moral good ; that he is the author of sin, as he is of holiness ; that he has made men mere machines, without any freedom of will ; that the non-elect are under the physical necessity of sinning ; that he has made no provision for their salvation, and that they could not therefore be saved if they would ; in a word if we held that the non-elect are forced or influenced to sin by the Almighty, and are by an arbitrary act of sovereignty and power predestinated to eternal death, then might men be excused, at the bare mention of our system, for raising their hands and rolling their eyes towards heaven in pious horror ! But the Searcher of hearts knows, and they ought to know, if they do not, that we are neither so ignorant, nor so wicked, as to hold sentiments so revolting and impious !

What we do maintain, I repeat it, is, that God has determined to "pass by" the non-elect, and to permit them to continue in unbelief and disobedience ; and foreseeing that, if left to themselves, they would thus freely and criminally reject his gospel and rebel against his law, he determined to punish them with eternal death, for their sins, and according to their just deserts.

And pray, where is the error or injustice of this ? Is it not a fact, that God does permit some to reject the gospel and continue to the last in sin ? Is it not a fact, that such are punished hereafter for their unbelief and wickedness ? And is not such punishment in fact righteous ? Well, then, why

should it be wrong for God to determine before-hand to permit, what it cannot be denied he does in fact permit? Or why should it be unjust for God to pre-determine that he will punish crimes that are foreseen by him, when it is conceded that he does punish them in fact, and that such punishment is in itself righteous? Surely that which it is not wrong for God to do, it cannot be wrong for God to determine to do: and as to the facts themselves, that are the objects of this supposed decree, there is, there can be no dispute concerning them. The "head and front of our offending" is, that we believe that God has pre-determined to permit and do, just what our opponents are obliged to acknowledge that he does in fact allow and do!

But let us submit this point also to the arbitration of the word of God; and then we shall see, whether the evil actions of men and their consequent punishment, are not, in the sense explained, the objects of the divine decrees.

Prov. xvi. 4—"The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

Psal. lxxvi. 10—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

Rom. ix. 17—"For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth."

1 Pet. ii. 7, 8—"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed."

Jude iv.—"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Acts ii. 23—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

But why multiply examples of this kind? Does not every reader of the Bible know, that the Scriptures are full of predictions relative to the evil actions of men, which God had pre-determined to permit and overrule for his own glory; and yet, for which, they, the voluntary and guilty authors,

should be punished? As we shall have occasion, however, to refer to this branch of the subject again, in the next chapter, I will merely beg you to remember, that these proofs cannot be rationally disputed, because they rest upon facts; facts divinely authenticated and infallibly recorded.

CHAPTER II.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

IN the former chapter, we endeavoured to explain and prove the three following propositions:—

I. That all things that come to pass in time, have been eternally and unchangeably fore-ordained, because most certainly foreknown to the infinitely perfect Jehovah. In other words, that as all things possible, as well as actual, must have been eternally known to God, and as he must therefore have foreseen, what would, on the whole, be most for his own glory and the greatest good of the universe, he could not but have preferred and fore-ordained, as an infinitely wise, benevolent, and Almighty Being, that they should come to pass: those that are morally good, by his own power or efficiency; and those that are morally evil, in consequence of his divine permission, and by the efficiency of free and responsible moral agents.

II. That with respect to our race in particular, God has by an eternal and immutable decree, elected some to eternal life; unconditionally, as to human merit, and out of his mere love, or free, unmerited grace; and yet, not without providing, in the same eternal and gracious purpose of election, for the certain and effectual application of all the means that are necessary to entitle and prepare them personally for heaven.

III. That the rest of mankind God has passed by; that is, has not elected to eternal life: and foreseeing their voluntary and wilful unbelief and wickedness, he fore-ordained them to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice. In other words, foreseeing that, if left to themselves, they would freely and wickedly rebel against him, he determined to punish them for their wickedness, and according to their just

deserts ; in order that his justice might be both vindicated and honoured.

Having thus briefly recapitulated, what was, in the former chapter, more fully explained, and, as we trust, satisfactorily proved both from reason and revelation, I shall now proceed,

IV. To answer the objections of Arminians to our doctrine : in doing which, I shall take occasion to show, that the very difficulties which they press against our system, lie with equal weight against their own.

Before we proceed, however, allow me to call your attention to this remarkable fact ; that the objections which Arminians make against the doctrine of Divine Decrees, as held by us, are the very same which the inspired apostle anticipated would be made against the doctrine, as stated by himself ! Thus in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, in which he clearly states, illustrates, and argumentatively proves the doctrine, he represents the objector as saying, “Is there unrighteousness with God? Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?” The fact, therefore, that the precise objections which are alleged against the doctrine, as held by us, were anticipated by the apostle against the doctrine, as stated by him, is conclusive proof, that his doctrine and ours are identical : and we might therefore content ourselves with his inspired rebuke of such presumptuous and impious cavilings, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” But to proceed—

1. It is objected, that if all things that come to pass are fore-ordained, then is God the author of sin, as well as of holiness.

This objection we had occasion to anticipate and briefly answer, when explaining in what sense we understand that all things are fore-ordained. But as this constitutes one of their main objections to our system, and is in fact the principal ground from which they deduce the most horrible consequences, it deserves a more distinct and formal refutation.

I again observe, therefore, that our standards clearly and carefully distinguish between the efficient, and the permissive decrees of God. By the former, he is the efficient author or cause of all moral good : By the latter he simply

determines to permit, restrain, and overrule, for wise and holy ends, the existence of moral evil, produced, not by his own agency, but by the free or voluntary efficiency of responsible moral agents.

Some of our opponents allege, that this is a distinction without a difference : and others ungenerously insinuate, that it is not recognized by our official standards, but is a modern invention, designed to conceal our obnoxious sentiments !

That it is the doctrine of our Church, will plainly appear from the following quotations :—

The Larger Catechism, 19th Answer :—“ God by his providence permitted some of the angels, wilfully and irrecoverably, to fall into sin and damnation, limiting and ordering that, and all their sins, to his own glory.”

The Confession of Faith, chap. 6th, sect. 1st.—“ Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan,” [not by God’s power or influence,] “ sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.”

Chap. 5, sect. 2—“ Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

Again, chap. 3, sect. 1—“ God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass ; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin ; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.”

Once more, chap. 5, sect. 4—“ The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men ; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends ; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God ; who being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin.”

And in the Explanatory Catechism, published nearly a century ago, and which, ever since, both in Scotland and this country, has been esteemed by Calvinists as a standard work, we have the following Questions and Answers:—

“ Q. How does the decree of God extend to things naturally and morally good ?

A. Effectively : because God is the author and efficient cause of all good.

Q. How does it extend to things morally evil ?

A. Permissively and directively only.

Q. How do you prove that God cannot be the author of sin ?

A. From the contrariety of it to his holy nature and law, and the indignation he has manifested against it, in what Christ suffered on account of it ; for he can never be the author of that whereof he is the avenger.”

The distinction, therefore, between the efficient, and the permissive decrees of God, is no modern invention, but the ancient and true doctrine of our Church.

And is there no difference, between God's making or exciting men to sin by his power or influence, and his permitting or not preventing them from sinning ? Between his determining to produce the evil himself, or to cause others by his power to do it, and his predetermining to permit men to abuse their liberty and to commit evil by the unprevented exercise of their own voluntary efficiency ?

True, the existence of moral evil may be said to be the consequence of the divine permission ; but the permissive will of God cannot therefore be said to be the cause of it. Take the following striking and beautiful illustration from the work of President Edwards on the Freedom of the Will ; a work, by the way, to which Arminians have never ventured to reply.

“ There is a vast difference between the sun's being the cause of the lightness and warmth of the atmosphere, and of the brightness of gold and diamonds by its presence and positive influence ; and its being the occasion of darkness and frost in the night, by its motion whereby it descends below the horizon. The motion of the sun is the occasion of the latter kind of events ; but not the proper cause, efficient, or producer of them. No more is any action of the divine Being, the cause of the evil of men's wills. If the sun were the proper cause of cold and darkness, it would be the fountain of these things, as it is the fountain of light and heat ; and then something might be argued from the nature

of cold and darkness, to a likeness of nature in the sun ; and it might be justly inferred that the sun itself is dark and cold ; but from its being the cause of these, no otherwise than by its absence, no such thing can be inferred, but the contrary. It may be justly argued that the sun is a bright and hot body, if cold and darkness are found to be the consequence of its withdrawalment ; and the more constantly and necessarily these effects are connected with and confined to its absence, the more strongly does it argue the sun to be the fountain of light and heat. So, inasmuch as sin is not the fruit of any positive influence of the Most High, but on the contrary, arises from the withdrawalment of his action and energy, and under certain circumstances, necessarily follows on the want of his influence, this is no argument that he is sinful, or his operation evil ; but on the contrary, that he and his agency are altogether holy, and that he is the fountain of all holiness. It would be strange arguing indeed, because men never commit sin, but only when God leaves them to themselves, and necessarily sin when he does so, that therefore their sin is not from themselves, but from God : as strange as it would be to argue, because it is always dark when the sun is gone, and never dark when he is present, that therefore darkness is from the sun, and that his disc and beams must be black !”

“ And as,” to use the language of another able writer, “ in this way, we can account for the existence of all manner of evil ; so we can thus understand how it is possible for God to bring about whatsoever comes to pass, without his being the actor, or maker, or instigator, of any thing that is not perfectly good. When he does not cause light, there will be darkness. When he does not make peace, there will be evil. The darkness takes place according to his appointment, with the same exactness and certainty, as if he actually created it ; and so does evil of every kind. What he determines to permit, knowing perfectly the circumstances and dispositions of every agent concerned, will as infallibly come to pass, as what he determines to do himself, or to effect by his own positive influence. The king’s heart, and the rivers of water ; the waves of the sea, and the tumults of the people, are in the hand of the Lord, to all important intents and purposes, if it be only true that he restrains them, or lets them run ; stilleth them, or suffereth them to rage, just as he sees fit.” His intelligent moral creatures act with entire freedom, and are the real authors of all their evil volitions and actions ; and he who “ knows the end from the beginning” who

perfectly foreknew all the evils they would commit, if left to themselves,—determined to permit them thus to sin, and yet to set bounds to their wickedness, and to overrule it for his own glory.

Now, unless it can be shown that the infinitely wise and almighty God, could not create finite agents, who, if left to themselves, would freely, and yet certainly act, in a manner which he infallibly foresaw they would act, there is no force in the objection that we are now considering. And this never has been and never can be shown.

We maintain, therefore, that God has created finite agents, possessed of certain faculties and placed in certain circumstances, who, he foreknew would, if left to themselves, commit certain moral evils; and that he determined, for wise and holy ends, to permit them to do, what he foresaw they would do freely, when thus left to themselves.

If we are asked, why did the Almighty will into existence, creatures who he foresaw would thus certainly, yet freely, sin? Or why did he determine to permit them thus to act, when he might have either prevented their existence, or else by his almighty power and grace have preserved them from sinning, as he did the angels that never fell? We reply, that the difficulty suggested, lies with equal, if not greater force against Arminianism. That sin does exist, cannot be disputed; that it was foreseen, is admitted; that it might have been prevented, cannot be denied: then let them explain, on their principles, why it was not prevented?

What does Wesley, himself, say, in his sermon entitled "God's love to fallen man," relative to the fall of Adam? "Was it not easy" (he inquires) "for the Almighty to have prevented it?" And answers, "It was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it; for he hath all power both in heaven and in earth. But" (he adds) "it was known to him at the same time, that it was best on the whole not to prevent it."

Now, I submit, whether this difficulty, thus confessedly pressing against both systems, is not capable, on our principles, of a much more full and satisfactory solution. For we not only say, as Wesley does, that "God knew that it was best, on the whole, not to prevent the first sin of Adam," but we add, that, knowing this, he determined not only to permit that, but all the sins that he foresaw would follow from it, and to limit and overrule the whole for his own most excellent glory.

I have dwelt thus long in reply to this first objection,

(that our doctrine makes God the author of sin,) because the principles involved in it, if satisfactorily and rightly settled, will furnish a ready answer to others, which rest in fact on the same foundation; as will appear as we proceed.

2. It is objected that the fore-ordination of all things destroys the free agency of men, and of course their personal responsibility.

This objection, you perceive, we have already anticipated and refuted, by showing that God is not the real author or efficient cause of the evil volitions and actions of men, which are freely originated and performed by themselves, although they are certainly foreknown to God and take place in exact accordance with his permissive will. And unless it can be shown, that the Almighty had not power to create finite agents, who, acting freely, should nevertheless act in accordance with his infinite foreknowledge, there is no force in this objection:—and this, I repeat it, never has been and never can be shown.

If we held, that God is the real author or instigator of the evil actions of men, then indeed would their free agency and responsibility be impossible! But we maintain just the contrary; that men originate and commit, freely, their own evil volitions and actions, without being forced or influenced by the Almighty; and acting thus with entire freedom, they are justly responsible for all their wickedness.

I frankly admit that there is a difficulty in reconciling the permissive and directive fore-ordination of the evil actions of men, with the perfect freedom and just responsibility of the agents by whom they are effected. But what then? Does not the same difficulty exist in relation to their certain futuration or foreknowledge, which is not denied by the great body of Arminians themselves? Hence Wesley, in answer to the inquiry, "How is God's foreknowledge consistent with our freedom?" candidly replies, as you may see in his *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. iii. p. 219—"I cannot tell." And yet his followers, with less candour, and much less sense, charge this difficulty upon us, as if it were peculiar to our system! The truth is, that this difficulty presses equally against both schemes; for it consists wholly in the absolute certainty of their futuration: and actions that are infallibly foreknown, are as certain, as if they were fore-ordained. When, therefore, I am asked by an Arminian, How are fore-ordination and free agency reconcilable?

I reply, as Wesley did, when asked, "How is God's foreknowledge consistent with our freedom? "I cannot tell! I cannot tell!"

But because we cannot comprehend or explain, how these truths harmonize, must we therefore reject them as false? We must not reject the doctrine of foreknowledge, because we cannot tell how it is consistent with our freedom: O no! Then, pray, why should we be required to repudiate the doctrine of permissive and directive foreordination, because "we cannot tell" how it is consistent with human liberty?

If each of these truths, separately considered, is established by sufficient evidence, why should they not both be admitted to be true, although we are unable to show their consistency with each other? Do we not act upon this principle in every department of physical knowledge? Are we not obliged to receive every fact upon its own evidence, even when unable to reconcile one with another? Why then should we not do so in relation to subjects which are in their nature so much more incomprehensible, or above our limited capacities?

We have proved, both from reason and revelation, that all things that come to pass, are fore-ordained; and no one denies, for every one is conscious of, his free agency and personal responsibility; and though we are not able to show, how these truths are consistent with each other, they must both be true, because separately proven to be so, and therefore in reality consistent with one another.

If further proof of the facts themselves be demanded, we refer to the infallible record. From many examples, take the few following:—

First, the case of Pharaoh, recorded in the beginning of the book of Exodus. There we are informed, that God appeared to Moses and commissioned him to go to Pharaoh and demand the liberation of his oppressed people: informing him, however, at the same time, that Pharaoh would not yield obedience, until after the infliction of many extraordinary judgments. Accordingly, we find that the Egyptian monarch refused again and again to let God's people go; that while, during the infliction of one and another judgment, he expressed his willingness to yield, he again and again hardened his heart, when respited, and obstinately refused; and that, at the last, though he suffered them to depart, from fear of death, they had scarcely gone, before he pursued after them in order to re-enslave them!

Now that the whole of Pharaoh's conduct had not only been foreknown, but fore-ordained, is indisputable, because it was expressly asserted by God to Moses, and requoted by an inspired apostle for the express purpose of illustrating and establishing this very doctrine: "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose," (or, as it is in Exodus, "In very deed for this cause,") "have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." (Rom. ix. 17. Exod. ix. 16.) And yet, who can doubt the free agency of Pharaoh or question his just responsibility? Is it not again and again declared, that Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go? yea, did he not himself confess, in the midst of one of the divine judgments, that he had "sinned" against God and his servants, and promise that, if the plague were removed, he would let them go? And were not his personal responsibility and criminality recognized by the holy and righteous one in his final and terrible destruction? Men may cavil as much as they please, but facts are facts, and they cannot get rid of difficulties by denying them!

Take the case of Joseph, recorded in the book of Genesis. There we are told, that God revealed to Joseph his predestined honour and power, in dreams, which, when related to his brethren, so excited their envy and malice, as to induce them, first to plot his destruction, and finally to sell him into Egypt as a slave! Without reciting the series of remarkable events that followed, by which he was exalted, from a prison, to the highest honour and authority which the king of Egypt could bestow, I will merely quote the two following explanatory passages: "And God sent me before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." "And Joseph said unto them, fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen. xlv. 7—8; l. 19, 20.) Now who can doubt either the fore-ordination of the conduct of Joseph's brethren, or their free agency in doing what they did? Nay, is it not expressly asserted, that God determined before-hand so to overrule it, as that it should result in the very opposite of what they themselves so wickedly and cruelly designed? "Ye thought," or intended "evil against me; but God meant," or had appointed, "it unto good!"

Let us refer to the crucifixion and death of Christ. That this event was fore-ordained cannot be denied, for it was not only clearly, repeatedly, and circumstantially predicted, but it was absolutely necessary in order to the accomplishment of our salvation. And yet, was it not effected by the free and wicked agency of men? Let the record answer: Acts iii. 17, 18—"And now brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled." 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8—"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Acts ii. 23—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts iv. 27, 28—"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

In connexion with the foregoing statements concerning the crucifixion of the Saviour, let us single out the case of one of the individual actors in that awful tragedy, one whose part was the most perfidious and execrable, and see whether his crime was not before ordained, and he the individual, pre-designated as its perpetrator! John vi. 64—"For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." Chapter xiii—"I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he." "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly." Yea, if you compare Zec. xi. 12, 13, with Matt. xxvi. 15; and xxvii. 3—10, you will find, that the very price that was paid for

the perpetration of this crime, and the object to which it was finally appropriated, were fore-ordained, and predicted centuries before !

Now that all these evil actions, and many others recorded in Scripture, were pre-determined by the permissive and directive will of God, cannot be disputed ; and yet, it is equally evident that the authors of them were perfectly free and responsible. And if these evil actions, some of them the most wicked that have ever been perpetrated, were permissively fore-ordained, without impairing the free agency or responsibility of those who were the authors of them, why not others ? why not all the wicked actions of men ? Certainly, the undeniable fact, that those specified were so fore-ordained, without impairing the liberty and accountability of the agents, proves conclusively, that fore-ordination is not necessarily, in any case, incompatible with the free agency and responsibility of man ; and, therefore, this objection of Arminians against our doctrine is without force. And now, recollect, this conclusion is not reached by a long chain of reasoning from abstract propositions, but is a simple, obvious, direct, and necessary deduction from many facts, facts which cannot be denied without impugning the integrity of the sacred record, or impeaching the veracity and justice of its holy and righteous Author !

3. It is objected that our doctrine is inconsistent with the goodness and justice of the Almighty.

As this objection is founded on either a gross misapprehension, or misrepresentation of our system, it is only necessary to expose this, in order to its refutation. It rests upon the assumption, that " God made a certain portion of our race," (I quote the language of one of their authors,) " for the express purpose to damn them ;" that they are laid under a " physical necessity of sinning ;" that God is " the author" or instigator of their wickedness ; that they are not free agents, but " mere machines ;" that there is " no provision for their salvation ;" and that their " unavoidable damnation" is an act of " arbitrary sovereignty and power !" Truly, if these premises were held by us, the inference stated in the objection would be as logical, as it is in itself awful and impious !

Need I again reiterate, that, instead of holding such abominable falsehoods, we maintain precisely their contraries ? We hold, that God made all men for his glory, and not any for the express purpose of damning them ; that

sinner, not God, are the efficient authors of their evil actions; that all men are perfectly free, and therefore justly accountable; that the provisions of the gospel are amply sufficient for all, and that all might therefore be saved if they would; and that the final punishment of the wicked is an act, not of sovereignty, but of justice: in other words, that God, foreseeing that all men, if left to themselves, would freely and wilfully sin, determined to pass by some, to leave them to themselves, and then, as an act of justice to punish them for their voluntary wickedness and according to their just deserts. And as he might justly have left all to themselves, and was under no obligation to save any, what wrong is there in his leaving some to their wilful disobedience, or in punishing them for their sins?

That God does permit some men to continue in sin, and then punish them hereafter for their wickedness, are facts which our opponents will not, because they cannot deny. Well then, if there be no wrong in actually permitting the wicked to sin, and no injustice in their actual punishment, where is the wrong or injustice in God's determining before-hand to allow them to sin, and to punish them for the sins, which he foresees they will thus freely and wilfully commit? Surely that which it is not wrong for God to permit and do in fact, it cannot be wrong for God to pre-determine that he will permit and do.

Here let me remind you that there have been two distinct schemes, on the subject of God's decrees, adopted by different theologians: the one is called the supra-lapsarian, and the other the sub-lapsarian scheme.

Supra-lapsarians maintain, "that God from all eternity, designed to glorify his divine perfections, in some objects out of himself, which he could not then be said to have done, inasmuch as they did not exist; and as a means conducive to this end, he designed to create man an intelligent creature, in whom he might be glorified; and since a creature, as such, could not be the object of the display of his mercy, or justice, he further designed to permit man to fall into a state of sin and misery, that so, when fallen, he might recover some out of that state, and leave others to perish in it."—See Ridgely. In other words, they consider the decree of reprobation as absolute as the decree of election, the one as much an act of sovereignty and power as the other, and they regard the creation and fall of man as only intermediate steps in the accomplishment of the divine purpose.

On the other hand, the Sub-lapsarians affirm, "that God considered men as made and fallen, and then designed to glorify his grace in the recovery of those who were chosen, by him, to eternal life; and his justice in them, whom he designed to condemn, as a punishment for their sins, which he foreknew they would commit, and purposed not to hinder; and he designed to glorify his sovereignty, in that one should be an object of grace, rather than another, whereas he might have left the whole world in that state of misery, into which he foresaw they would plunge themselves." (Ridgely.) In other words, that the decrees of election and reprobation, presuppose the creation and fall of man; and that, while the election of some to life was an act of divine sovereignty and grace, that of reprobation, was an act of justice, founded on the foreseen wickedness of the reprobate, which God determined not to hinder, but to permit and overrule for his own glory.

The latter, or sub-lapsarian scheme, is the true doctrine of our church. Thus in the Confession of Faith, chap. iii. sec. 6—7, it is said, "Wherefore, they who are elected; being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ," &c. And "the rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth, or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice."

As we maintain, therefore, that the decree of reprobation contemplates men as fallen and hell-deserving, and is an act of sheer justice, founded on the foreseen wickedness of the wicked, freely and wilfully committed, how can it be inconsistent with the divine goodness and justice? unless, indeed, the actual punishment of the wicked be so! or it can be shown that God was under obligation actually to save all men universally!

If we held with the supra-lapsarians, that the decree of reprobation is as absolute or unconditional, as the decree of election, then there might be some force in the objection; but we hold, as I have just proved, the very contrary. Do our opponents comprehend this distinction? and if so, why do they persist in charging upon us the views of individual supra-lapsarians, which are not in accordance with our confession, and for which, as a church, we are not at all responsible? And the public should observe that, when Pres-

byterians are charged with representing God as arbitrary and unjust, the accusations are supported by horrible extracts from the writings of supra-lapsarians, or isolated and distorted passages from the works of authors acknowledged by us as orthodox; and not by a fair and candid exhibition of our official standards! We cannot, however, be justly held responsible for all the expressions of any individual—not even those of Calvin himself—much less can we be held accountable for the objectionable opinions of those whose theological scheme differs so materially from our Confession and the general belief of orthodox divines! Would Arminian Methodists be willing to be responsible for all the expressions of their individual authors? Would they be willing to endorse all the published opinions of Dr. Adam Clarke? or some of those even of Wesley himself?—Let us test them on the subjects of Episcopacy and Republicanism:—In regard to the former, Wesley says, in a letter to Mr. Asbury, dated September 20, 1788, “How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start, at the very thought. Men may call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never with my consent call me a bishop. For my sake, for God’s sake, for Christ’s sake, put a full end to this!”—And with respect to republicanism he writes, in a letter to J. Mason, dated January 13, 1790; “As long as I live, the people shall have no share in choosing either stewards or leaders among the Methodists. We are no Republicans and never intend to be!” Now, would they like to be held responsible for these opinions and expressions and for all the odious inferences which might be drawn from them? Why, then, should they persist in parading, not merely the unguarded expressions of orthodox divines, but the most objectionable opinions of supra-lapsarians, whose theological system differs so much from ours, as if they were in accordance with the real doctrine of the Presbyterian Church!—Let us in fairness be judged by our official standards and the prevailing sentiment of our denomination. In other words, “Let them do unto us, as they would that we should do unto them.”

The truth is, however, that the real difficulty involved in the objection which we have been considering, does not press with greater force against our system, than it does against Arminianism. The difficulty does not lie in God’s determining to pass by some contemplated as fallen and

guilty, and fore-ordaining them to dishonour and wrath, as an act of justice, for their foreseen wickedness—but in his determining to bring those into existence, who, he foresaw, would, freely it is true, yet certainly, continue in sin and thus perish for ever. Now, how easy would it be for us to retort upon Arminians:—Did not God infallibly foreknow who would certainly and eternally perish?—Could he not have prevented their birth?—Why then did he bring them into existence, when he infallibly foreknew that they would perish for ever? Surely they are born to be damned, for their damnation is infallibly foreseen and might have been prevented, by his hindering their existence! Creating men who, he infallibly foresees, will perish, is not that, in effect, “making men for the express purpose to damn them!” Surely this is inconsistent with the divine goodness and “represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, more false, more cruel, and more unjust!” Thus you perceive that the same inferences may be drawn from their doctrine of foreknowledge, that are as falsely deduced from our doctrine of fore-ordination!

That there are difficulties connected with this subject—and difficulties which press equally against both systems, no intelligent, thinking man will deny; nor is it possible for any man perfectly to resolve them. While, therefore, we can see and do maintain, that there is no unrighteousness in God’s suffering men to sin, and that their punishment, on account of their free and wilful wickedness, is strictly just;—we are obliged to resolve the election of some to eternal life, and the creation of others, who, it was foreseen, would sin and therefore perish, into the mere sovereign will and pleasure of the Almighty:—and we are constrained to cry out with the apostle, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”—or to say, with the Saviour, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

4. It is objected that, according to our doctrine, the damnation of the non-elect is not only infallibly certain, but absolutely unavoidable!—That there is no provision for their salvation—that the invitations and promises of the Gospel cannot, in sincerity or truth, be made to them—and that they could not be saved if they would!

This objection I have already substantially answered; but as it is one of the most popular and injurious, suffer me to

add a few more words in reply. I will not repeat what I have said concerning the free agency of men, upon the assumed denial of which this objection partly rests. But I have a word to say in regard to the provisions of the Gospel, the sufficiency of which, this objection also falsely takes it for granted that we deny.

Now, observe, we hold, as cordially and as fully as any, to the infinite merit of Christ's obedience and death, and believe that it is, in itself considered, abundantly sufficient for the salvation of the whole world of mankind.

True, there is a sense in which we maintain that Christ died only for the elect;—that is, as the death of Christ does not in fact effect the salvation of any to whom it is not applied by the grace of God through faith—and as it was not the intention of God to apply it in fact to any but the elect—therefore we say that, in this sense, Christ died for his covenant people only.

What then? Do our opponents believe that all men are actually saved by the death of Christ? Do they not limit its saving efficacy to those to whom it is actually applied, or, in other words, to those who believe? They must either turn Universalists and affirm that by the death of Christ all will be certainly and actually saved, or else, when they declare that Christ died for all, they must mean, just what we believe as well as they, that the death of Christ is, in itself considered, infinitely meritorious, and therefore sufficient for the salvation of all mankind. The only difference between us on this point is this—they hold that none but those who believe will be saved by the death of Christ;—we affirm, in addition, that those who are elected shall most certainly believe: but, so far as the merit of Christ is concerned, there is no difference between us—for we hold as well as they, that it is, in itself, sufficient for all the race.

Ah, but, says one—with what sincerity can the offer of the gospel be made to those, (supposing it to be in itself sufficient for all,) whom God has determined to leave to themselves and who he foresees will certainly reject it? I answer—to say nothing of the ignorance of men in regard to the secret purposes of Jehovah—the determination of God to leave them to themselves, does not affect the freedom of their choice, nor prevent them from embracing the offers that are made.

But might not the same objection be urged—and urged with just as much show of reason—against the universal

offer of the gospel as made by Arminians? Does not God infallibly foreknow, who will certainly reject the offer? With what sincerity or truth, then, it might be asked, are such invited and exhorted to embrace the gospel!

The truth is, however, that this objection has no force as it respects either the foreknowledge or the permissive decree of God. For no man can tell what God secretly foresees, or what He has permissively fore-ordained; the agents all are perfectly free—they might (by the grace of God,) accept the offer of mercy if they chose—and would assuredly be saved if they did. Jesus knew, from the beginning, who they were that believed not:—was He insincere in His offers of mercy to them? Could he not say with sincerity, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life?” How then can we be charged with insincerity in offering the gospel to all, when we do not know who will, or will not accept the offer? when we believe that the provisions of the gospel are amply sufficient for all—and that the secret purpose of God respecting the ultimate destiny of individuals, whatever it may be, does not in the least degree impair their freedom or hinder any from accepting the invitations of salvation?

Lastly, it is objected, that our doctrine either discourages all effort in seeking salvation, or encourages presumption; and that its legitimate and practical tendency is licentious!

I should be ashamed to repeat the same things in reply so often, were it not obvious that all their objections, however multiplied numerically, rest in fact upon the same false assumptions and unwarranted allegations—however varied they may be in form; and therefore we have little else to do than again and again to expose and repudiate these in order to their refutation. It cannot, however, be necessary, after all that I have said, to say much in reply to those presented in the form of the last objection.

I will merely remark therefore, that our doctrine cannot be said justly to discourage proper efforts in order to salvation—because no man can know what the secret will of God may be respecting his future destiny; because the secret purpose of God, whatever it may be, does not in the least impair either his personal liberty or responsibility; and because the Almighty has ordained the use of means, as necessary to the attainment of salvation, and has graciously promised to save, “whosoever believeth.”

Nor can our doctrine, rightly understood, encourage pre-
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sumption : For as the election of God's people includes the proper use and effectual application of all the means that are necessary to entitle and prepare them for heaven ; so no man can have any assurance that he is one of the elect, except as he does sincerely and truly believe in Christ and is obedient to the divine commands.

And with regard to the accusation, that our doctrines tend to licentiousness, we need only refer to impartial history, or challenge a comparison with our accusers ! In this connexion I might cite the testimony of many who, though they were not themselves Calvinists, have yet gratuitously borne the strongest testimony in favour of the talents, the learning, the piety, and the usefulness of those who were.* In truth, the advocates of our doctrines have

* The following remarks by a distinguished divine of the Church of England, who professes not to be a Calvinist, are as just as they are striking. " Does not this opinion (of the immoral tendency of Calvinism,) in a great measure originate from a mistaken conception of what Calvinism is ? Those who would impute all these practical evils to the operation of Calvinism, appear to suppose that the belief of the Calvinist, by which he admits the doctrine of personal election, necessarily includes also an assumption of his own election. The Calvinist, properly so called, is no enthusiast. He believes, indeed, in the eternal purposes of God as to the salvation of the elect ; but as to the hopes of his own salvation, and of his individual interest in those purposes, he professes to obtain it by the evidences which he possesses of his being himself in a renewed and justified state. He knows from the word of God that the saints are ' chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit,' no less than ' the belief of the truth ;' that they are ' predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ,' and ' created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them. And hence he feels that it is only so long as he experiences the sanctifying influences of the Spirit in his own heart, so long as he himself in some degree reflects the image of Christ, and walks imperfectly indeed, but yet sincerely, in good works, that he can have any scriptural grounds for concluding that he is one of God's elect, and will have his portion with the saints. This is true Calvinism. And where is the tendency of this doctrine to make its followers slothful or confident, negligent of the means of grace, or inattentive to moral and relative duties ? While the practical evils which Calvinism is charged with producing, are so prominently and studiously exhibited to view by many of its opponents ; let us not omit, on the other hand, to do justice to this calumniated system, nor forget the abundant good which it is not only capable of accomplishing, but which it actually does accomplish. I have no doubt, but that some of the sublimest feelings of pure and spiritual delight which are ever experienced on earth, are those of which the Calvinist partakes, when in his secret retirement with his God, ' the Spirit bearing witness with his spirit,' and shining on his own gracious operation on the heart, he meditates on

been more frequently charged with undue exactness and austerity in Christian morals, than with their opposites;—so that their “blue laws” are still the theme of ridicule or hate—and the very phrase, “pūritanical,” is with many synonymous with undue preciseness! No, no, whatever may be thought of the truth or falsehood of the doctrines themselves, no intelligent and impartial man can affirm, that their advocates have been less moral or religious—less patriotic or evangelically useful, than their

the wonderful and unspeakable privileges to which, through Christ, he sees himself entitled; and resolving all the blessings which have been already received, or are prepared for him hereafter, into the eternal purpose, and electing love of God, his Father, and absorbed in a holy contemplation of the divine counsels and perfections, he lies prostrate before the throne of grace, in deep humiliation, and with overwhelming joy. I do not say that others have not their peculiar feelings of spiritual delight; but these are his. And does he rise from such communion with his God, without enlarged desires and resolutions of more seriously devoting himself to the divine favour, of more decidedly overcoming the flesh and the world, and of more faithfully doing the will and advancing the glory of his Lord and Saviour? Facts and experience reply to this inquiry. Among no denomination or description of professing Christians, is there to be found a larger portion of humble, pious, and devoted servants of God, persons of a truly Christian spirit, zealous of good works, and exemplary in every duty and relation of life, than among those who hold the Calvinistic tenets. I am sure that your observation and your candour will fully justify this statement. And, therefore, so far as this system is to be judged of by its actual effects, I think that, on a candid reconsideration of the subject, you will be induced to abandon your objection, and to admit that it was founded on an erroneous and partial view of the subject.”

A very able and learned foreign lawyer, the author of the article Predestination, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, though he is evidently no friend to Calvinism, makes the following declaration:—“There is one remark which we feel ourselves bound in justice to make, although it appears to us somewhat singular. It is this: that, from the earliest ages down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient Stoics, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists, and the Jansenists, when compared with that of their antagonists, the Epicureans, the Sadducees, the Arminians, and the Jesuits, we shall find that they have excelled in no small degree, in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues; and have been the highest honour of their own ages, and the best models for imitation to every age succeeding. At the same time, it must be confessed, that their virtues have in general been rendered unamiable by a tinge of gloomy and severe austerity.” For the extracts in this note, see Dr. Miller’s Tract on “Presbyterianism;”—which contains, it may not be amiss to say to those who have not read it, an able defence not only of the Doctrines, but also of the Government and Form of Worship of the Presbyterian Church.

opponents. They may not be as ostentatious, or fanatical as some others, but they have quite as much moral principle, and exhibit quite as much uprightness and piety, in their domestic and social relations, as their neighbours.

Having thus answered the objections which have been brought against our doctrines, let me now proceed to state, in a very brief and summary manner,

V. Some of our objections against Arminianism.

I have not allowed myself time to do more than merely to state them; because my main object was, not to expose the system of our opponents, but to defend our own. With this explanation, I remark

1. That we object to the system of Arminianism, because we are fully convinced that it is contrary to the Scriptures; which, as we have shown, do not only positively teach our doctrine, but expressly deny the truth of theirs. Thus, 2 Tim. i. 9—"Who hath saved' us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." And again, Rom. ix. 16—"So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

2. We object to their system, because we think it derogatory to the divine perfection. To suppose that the Almighty has no fixed plan in the government of the world, and no certain control over his moral creatures:—to suppose that to Him any thing is contingent, and that His designs are perpetually liable to be changed and frustrated by the uncertain volitions and actions of men, appears to us incompatible with the divine perfection, if not with the very idea of the existence of a God!

3 We object to their system, because it is inconsistent with the doctrine of a special or particular providence, which the Scriptures so clearly and fully reveal; and according to which, although "a man's heart deviseth his way, yet the Lord directeth his steps."

4 We object to their system, because it is inconsistent with the certain accomplishment of the plan of Redemption: for, according to their principles, it was quite possible that the death of Christ might have been wholly in vain, and not a single soul saved!

5. We object to their system, because it is derogatory to Christ, and detracts from the glory which is due to God

as the Author and finisher of faith. For just so far as faith, or any good works of men, are considered as the condition or moving cause of their election unto life, just so far do they detract from the merit of Christ and the infinite love of God which are the sole cause of our salvation.

6. We object to their system, because it engenders spiritual pride and self-boasting. Arminians cannot consistently say—"We are what we are by the grace of God;"—nor join in unison with the saints in heaven,—“not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise!”

And lastly, we object to their system, because it is inconsistent with the experience of all true Christians, and with the highest duties of devotion. Every real child of God is conscious that he is what he is, by the grace of God alone—that if he had been left to himself, he would never have turned from sin to holiness—and that, even now, if not restrained from sin, and constrained to holiness, by the power and mercy of God, he would fall and perish! Hence in all his devotions he humbly acknowledges these truths and gratefully ascribes the whole of his salvation to the free, unmerited grace and compassion of the Lord. It is remarkable that, however Arminian our Christian brethren may be in argument, they are invariably Calvinistic in their prayers! And one of the best methods to test the truth or falsehood of their system is, to request them to pray; and if they have any real experience of the grace of God, they will immediately confess and acknowledge every truth that is essential to our system: not, indeed, every false inference from, or horrible distortion of, our doctrine, but every truth which its enlightened advocates regard as essential to the system. Now, we object to preach a doctrine which contradicts the universal experience of Christians, and which even its advocates are obliged to abandon when they approach a throne of grace! We prefer to teach and pray alike—to tell the people, just what we are constrained to confess to the Searcher of hearts!

I had intended, before concluding, to show what practical use and improvement ought to be made of the doctrine of God's decrees: but having already occupied so much of your time, I must leave the subject to your own reflections.

I will merely add, that there is nothing in our system, rightly understood, to discourage any from seeking and obtaining salvation. For the decrees of God are unknown to

us, and do not in the least degree impair our personal freedom and responsibility. And as the provisions of the gospel are amply sufficient for the whole race, and its invitations and promises are freely addressed to all—without exception or reservation—it is the duty as well as privilege of every one to embrace them and live.

And finally, as the purpose of election unto life eternal, includes and implies the proper use and effectual application of all the means that are necessary to entitle and qualify the elect for heaven,—every professing Christian should endeavour to use those means assiduously, and so “make his calling and election sure”—sure to his own mind, to the joy and comfort of his own soul. And if he has the Scriptural evidence of his having been effectually called—if he is now walking by faith, and in obedience to the commands of God, then let him adore and praise the Author and finisher of his salvation, and be strengthened and encouraged in duty, by the absolute assurance of his ultimate and glorious reward. 2 Pet. i. 10—“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

“GRACE! ’tis a charming sound!
 Harmonious to the ear!
 Heaven with the echo shall resound,
 And all the earth shall hear.

Grace first contrived the way
 To save rebellious man;
 And all the steps *that* grace display,
 Which drew the wondrous plan.

Grace first inscribed my name
 In God’s eternal book;
 ’Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,
 Who all my sorrows took.

Grace led my roving feet
 To tread the heavenly road;

And new supplies each hour I meet,
While pressing on to God.

Grace taught my soul to pray,
And made my eyes o'erflow ;
'Twas grace that kept me to this day,
And will not let me go.

Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days ;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone
And well deserves the praise."

THE END.

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AN

A P O L O G Y,

FOR NOT JOINING

THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

BY

A PRESBYTER.

PHILADELPHIA:

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W. MITCHELL, in the Office of the Clerk of the District Court of
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AN APOLOGY, &c.

It is greatly to be regretted that with some there is so much of the spirit of proselyting. In common with many of my friends, I have been frequently advised of late, to join the Protestant Episcopal Church. This has led me to some thought on the subject, and my previous convictions against changing my church relations have been thereby greatly strengthened; some of the reasons will be found in the following pages.

The most prominent argument of a general character against the peculiar claims and practices of the Episcopal Church, is, that I cannot find them in the Bible; and I have always been accustomed to think that God's own word should have paramount authority in determining questions in religion. But to be specific,

1. *I cannot find in the Bible any authority for an Apostolical Succession in the Church.*

On this succession from the Apostles, the advocates of diocesan Episcopacy rest to a great extent, their high, exclusive claims. They argue that there cannot be a true church without a regularly authorized ministry; a ministry to be regular must come directly from the Apostles by an unbroken succession; no others but themselves amongst Protestants have such a succession, and consequently no others have a valid claim to Churchship.* The Apostolical Succession, therefore, is the great foundation on which rests the whole fabric of High-Church Episcopacy. This unchurches all other denominations except Episcopalians. Now, if this is of such great importance, and indeed fundamental, to the outward organization of the Church, is it not strange that the Bible should remain perfectly silent on the subject; and that from Genesis to Revelations you

* I am aware that there are still in the Episcopal Church some who are known as *Low Church*, and who repudiate these ultra exclusive claims; these, however, now constitute so small a portion, that they cannot be taken as a fair index of the whole body. It is well known that at present most Episcopalians are *High Church*.

cannot find one word about an *Apostolical Succession*? I sometimes ask my Episcopal friends to relieve this difficulty, and point me to even one *authoritative passage*, but hitherto I have been entirely unsuccessful.

I discover, indeed, that many of the most eminent authors of that church have been met by the same difficulty, and have candidly acknowledged that the Apostles have no successors. Thus the learned Doctor Barrow says, "The Apostolic office as such was *personal and temporary*; and, therefore, according to its nature and design *NOT successive* or communicable to others in perpetual descendance from them. It was as such *in all respects extraordinary*, conferred in a special manner, designed for special purposes, discharged by special aids, endowed with special privileges as was needful for the propagation of Christianity and founding churches."—*Barrow's Works, Vol. I. p. 77.*

Henry Dodwell, also a distinguished Episcopal minister, says, "The office of the Apostles *perished with the Apostles*; there never was any *succession* to any of them, *except Judas the traitor.*"—(Powell on Succession.)

Archbishop Whately of Dublin, famous not only for his high position as an archbishop in the Church of England and Ireland, but for his great learning and profound logic, has recently published a work on the "kingdom of Christ" in which he says, "*Successors* in the apostolic office, the apostles *have none.*" "*There is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with any approach to certainty his own spiritual pedigree.*" p. 182.

Even the "Hon. and Rev. A. P. Percival, B. C. L.," assisted by a wonderful array of great names in the preparation of his "*Apology for the Doctrine of the Apostolic Succession*," makes the wonderful acknowledgment, "If nothing will satisfy men but actual demonstration, *I yield at once: neither this nor any succession in the whole world can be actually demonstrated,*" p. 48. Mr. Percival will excuse me for saying that on a point so important as this, nothing but *actual demonstration* will be satisfactory.

If indeed the apostles were sent forth to ordain as their great work, and by ordaining to start this important succession, is it not remarkable, that their commission for the work should have altogether omitted even a reference to

this first duty, and dwelt exclusively upon another and very different point? Matthew tells us, x. 5, &c.—“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them saying, *Go, preach*: heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.” Again, xxviii. 18—20, “Jesus said, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, Go ye therefore and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; *teaching* them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Speaking of the purpose of their ordination, Mark says, iii. 14, “And he ordained twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to *preach*.” Paul says, 1 Cor. i. 17, “Wo is me if I *preach not the gospel*.” All this is very strange language, if after all, the most important business was *not* to go and preach the gospel, but to exercise the ordaining power, and start the succession.

I do not like, at any rate, the way of getting this succession. It comes, (if it comes at all) through all the corruptions of the church of Rome.* What a channel! Many of the popes, through whom of course it must have passed, are described by historians, as “devils,” “adulterers,” “incestuous,” “contaminated with every vice and all iniquity,” “wading to the pontificate through the blood of a predecessor,” and much more to the same amount or much worse.† I will not trouble my brethren by asking how they get along with the succession about the time of the

* I am aware that some have of late attempted to make out a succession through another channel. Their labour will be lost, for even admitting for the sake of argument that there was any foundation originally for such a succession, it is a matter of indubitable certainty, that from A. D. 688 to 1414, no fewer than seventeen *Archbishops of Canterbury*, were consecrated either by the Pope or his legates; and that from 1119 to 1342, twelve archbishops of York were indebted solely to Rome for their consecration.—*See Powell*.

† John XXII. was a heretic, and denied the immortality of the soul. John XXIII., Gregory XII., and Benedict XIII. were all Popes and *infallible* heads of the Church at one time, and the Council of Constance cashiered the whole of them as illegitimate. Pope Marcellinus actually sacrificed to idols. Silvester II. sacrificed to the devil. Formosus was promoted to the chair through perjury. Sergius III. caused his predecessor's body to be dug out of the grave, its head cut off, and then flung into the Tiber. Boniface deposed, imprisoned, and then plucked out the eyes of his predecessor.—*Stevens' Spirit of the Church of Rome*.

female Pope Joan (her fame none the fairest,) or when there were four popes at once, or when for years there was none at all, or when all the acts of one of them were annulled—ordinations and all, even after these had ordained others, or in the midnight and confusion and pollution of the dark ages. Following a drop of pure water from St. Louis to the Gulf of Mexico through the muddy Mississippi, would be quite as profitable and encouraging as trying to trace such a succession. Even if the succession could be found amidst all this rubbish, I would much rather have it some other way, than through what even a Church of England writer says, is “the mother of harlots.” I think I am warranted, however, in coming to the same conclusion with Archbishop Whately, that “*successors the apostles have none.*”

2. *I do not find in the Bible any such order of clergy as diocesan bishops.* By diocesan bishops is meant an order superior to presbyters or pastors, and having authority over churches and other clergy, within a certain territory, generally extensive. I do indeed, find a great deal about *bishops* in the New Testament, but these are evidently mere pastors or presbyters. Before proceeding further, it may be as well to state, that the words *elder* and *presbyter* in English, are both translations of the Greek word *presbuteros*, and that both *overseer* and *bishop* are translations of the same Greek word *episcopos*.

In Acts xx. 17 to the close, we have the narrative of Paul's last meeting with the officers of the church at Ephesus. He landed at Miletus, “and sent to Ephesus, and called the elders (*presbyters*) of the Church,” and among other things, said to them, “Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,” (*episcopoi*—bishops.) What! bishops! several bishops in one church! This is reversing the order of things. Our Episcopal friends tell us, there are to be several churches at least to one bishop, but here are several bishops to one church. Paul says, too, the *presbyters* are to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them *bishops*. Presbyters, then, are bishops!—one and the same order! This is surely a bad prospect for diocesan episcopacy.

If there *had* been any one man over all these bishops in this *one* flock at Ephesus, by whatever name he might have

been called, it would have been very strange if Paul in his last meeting with the diocesan clergy of this individual, should have neither sent him a parting message, nor even mentioned his name, nor made the slightest allusion to him. It seems by no means an unnatural inference, therefore, that there was no such superior person, but that these bishops were the highest officers in that church.

Again, in writing to the church at Philippi, Paul addresses his epistle "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and deacons." So there were a number of bishops in this one church also; and nobody over them either, or surely some allusions would have been made to him in the address of this epistle.

In 1 Pet. v. 1, we read, "The elders (presbyters) which are among you I exhort, who am also *an elder*" (*sum-presbuteros*—a fellow presbyter.) Even an apostle then, was a presbyter only, and on an equality with other presbyters in the ministerial office; and that the apostle Peter too!

That the office of presbyter and bishop is the same, has been acknowledged by many eminent episcopal writers. Bishop Burnet says, "I acknowledge bishop and presbyter to be one and *the same office*;" and with him Stillingfleet, Archbishop Tillotson and many others agree. Bishop Onderdonk, of Pennsylvania, says, "The name *Bishop*, which now designates the highest grade of the ministry, is not appropriated to that office in the Scriptures;" (p. 12.) This is a very strange admission from one so high in office in a church which lays so much stress on its professedly apostolic character. Bishop Onderdonk however goes on to say, "the highest grade is there found in those called apostles" "and angels of the seven churches," or in other words those now called bishops by Episcopalians, were in the Bible called *apostles and angels*. Why not, then, call them so now? If this was scriptural usage, and we have the scriptural office, surely there can be no harm in retaining the scriptural language. Why may we not say *Apostle Onderdonk*, and *Angel Doane* or *Angel Whittingham*? This would sound truly apostolic; and besides there is often a great deal gained by a name. The same writer, however, proceeds to say, "It was after the apostolic age, that the name *Bishop* was taken from the second order (presbyters) and given to the first," (the successors of the apos-

bles.)* Here is a candid confession of a very singular transaction. "The name *Bishop* was taken from the presbyters!" But by what authority? certainly not by any scriptural warrant, for the writer himself tells us the change was made *after the apostolic age*. We have here, then, a church claiming to be peculiarly apostolic, changing the arrangements made by the apostles, deliberately continuing in this unauthorized and unscriptural condition, and actually denouncing others as not apostolic, because they will not follow their example and adopt the same innovations.

Then, too, what uncourteous treatment of the presbyters! Even if the successors of the apostles were too modest to use the name belonging to them, it would give them no right to take away the lawful name of others. For a man to be too modest to use his own name, and then take that of another man, thus depriving him of that which is his by right, is surely not very scriptural. Moreover, I repeat it, if the apostles have given these names for their *successors*, why not use them? It can be no more immodest to take the name than the office—the shadow than the substance. For my part I agree with Bishop Burnet, that "bishop and presbyter are one and the same office," and consequently, that no one man has authority to rule over "other clergy." I would rather leave the names where the Bible has left them, and abandon altogether this "first order" that has come to light "since the apostolic age."

3. Again, *I cannot find in the Bible any authority for the use of a liturgy, or forms of prayer, in the Christian Church*. A great deal of the liturgy comprehended in the book of *Common Prayer*, is indeed pious and devotional. So, however, are a great many printed sermons; and yet I should not think it for edification, to have these same sermons read over every Sabbath day. There would be danger after a while, that they would become familiar and common place, and in the end lose their effect. That a few pious persons determined to practise devotion under any circumstances, might probably always find in them something profitable, and that some by constantly associating their devotional feelings with this particular language, might at last conclude that there could be no other means so well adapted to promote spiritual mindedness, I can easily con-

* Was it not also "after the apostolic age" that this division into first and second orders was made?

ceive: but that to the great mass of people, they would become little more than empty words, I doubt not.

The 119th Psalm is an inspired composition, and about its excellence there can therefore be no question. It embraces language, too, expressive of almost every variety of Christian feeling, and yet very few would think it best that this psalm should be read permanently, as the greater part of the services of every Sabbath.

Besides, the history of the Christian religion shows, that there has always been in human nature, a great tendency to a mere formality. Even the partially sanctified heart is with great difficulty made to rest in Christ alone as its dependence, whilst the unsanctified nature is always prone to take refuge in any thing else. If, therefore, you invest religion with a vast number of forms and ceremonies, there is great danger that you will be encouraging this wrong tendency; and that in the end, men will practise the forms and forget the religion, and thus become a body of mere formalists. If I am not mistaken, those who lay most stress on forms and ceremonies, lay least on the spiritual religion of the heart; and where you hear most about prayer-books, you hear least about the Bible.

Moreover, I am wholly averse to changing God's arrangements. I should be afraid if I went to Church and spent most of the time in reading prayers, that I was not making preaching as prominent as God has made it. Then, when sometimes the preaching was omitted altogether, and I found myself very well satisfied with the prayers alone, or exalting the prayer-book, and caring very little for the want of preaching, I am sure I should be afraid I was getting back to the spirit of the dark ages, when they abandoned preaching almost altogether, and read prayers and practised ceremonies all the time.*

That the modern High-Church Puseyite principles, are indeed leading rapidly to this same state of things is obvious. The Rev. Richard H. Froude, one of the founders of the Oxford Tracts says, "*If* you are determined to have a

* See the history of the Church, from 9th to 15th century. Sozomen speaking of the Church of Rome at and before his time, says, "There was no preaching in that Church; neither by the bishop nor any one else." In Ireland prior to the Reformation "preaching constituted no part of the clerical office."—*Reid's His. Pres Ch. in Ireland*. The same thing is true to a very great extent in popish countries, even at the present day.

pulpit in your Church, *which I would much rather be without*, do put it at the west end of the Church:—but whatever you do, do not let it stand in the light of the altar, which if there is any truth in my notions of ordination is more sacred than the Holy of Holies in the Jewish temple.” The *Episcopal Recorder* of Philadelphia, says—“The spirit which brings up these (i. e. ceremonies) is at the same time disposed to muzzle the pulpit. In one of our churches, not far distant, where there are generally three ministers present every Sunday, and where there is a peculiar love for Oxford innovations, *the people have assembled as much as two or three Sundays in succession without a sermon*; some remarks upon the collect of the day, or upon some ordinance or custom, taking the place. This is the high road to Rome. When ceremonies are lifted up, and preaching put down, we are not far from a condition, which will require a second reformation.”

But I am digressing. The question is what the Bible says about the use of forms. The New Testament I suppose was intended to embody the great authoritative principles and practices of the primitive apostolic Christians. Let us therefore look into the writings of the apostles and evangelists, and the teachings of Christ.

Beginning with Matthew, I find in the 6th chapter the Lord's Prayer, with the preface “After this manner pray ye.” This *does* look something like a form sure enough;—but further than this I discover nothing in Matthew. Mark says nothing on the subject. Luke gives substantially the same prayer with Matthew, but he could not have remembered it was a *form*, for he does not use the same words, and even omits altogether the doxology. If Luke had lived in these days, he would have been called at least a *low-churchman* for this. John is equally silent with Mark. Then from the first chapter of Acts to the last of Revelation, I do not find any form, not even the Lord's Prayer. If Christ gave that prayer to his disciples for a form, it is very remarkable that we find no instance on record of their ever using it. They seemed to have prayed just as the occasion suggested, and as the Spirit taught them. I conclude, therefore, it is best to follow their example and have no form.

4. *I do not find either, that the Bible warrants what the Book of Common Prayer teaches about the sacrament*

of *Baptism*. In the *Catechism* the second question is "Who gave you this (i. e. your) name?" and the answer is, "my sponsors in Baptism; *wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.*" This is making very thorough work for simply a little water applied to the forehead! Perhaps, however, it may only be strong language intending to signify that the child at baptism is brought into connexion with the visible Church. Let us look a little further then, and see what *was* intended. The order for the "Baptism of Infants" will no doubt give the explanation. In the introductory address of this service is an exhortation to the people to pray the Lord Jesus Christ that "he will grant to this child *that which by nature he cannot have*; that he may be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost, and received into Christ's holy church, and be made a living member of the same." The second prayer before the administration of the ordinance asks "that this child may receive remission of sin by *spiritual regeneration*;" and after the baptism we read: "Seeing now, dearly beloved, that this child is *regenerate* and grafted into the body of Christ's church; let us give thanks unto Almighty God," &c., and then the prayer goes on to say, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee, *to regenerate this infant with the HOLY SPIRIT*, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church, and humbly we beseech thee, that he being dead to sin," &c. Certainly, if one wished to teach that the child was really and spiritually regenerated, I know not what stronger language he could have used. Previous to baptism the people are to ask for the child "*that which by nature he cannot have*;" this the prayer explains to be *spiritual regeneration*, and then after the ordinance God is thanked that the child now has it, i. e. *spiritual regeneration*.

A writer even in the church of England seems to understand this to be the teaching of the *Order for baptism*. "Openly," says he, "does the church (Episcopal) declare her belief in the case of every child brought to the font, that God will favourably receive him; that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy; that he will give unto him the blessing of everlasting life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom; and lastly she prays that God

will sanctify that water then and there present, to the mystical washing away of sin, and that the child to be baptized in that water so blessed, may receive the fulness of his grace, and ever remain in the number of his faithful and elect children. After the administration of the sacrament, the church declares that the child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church, and then joyfully goes on to give thanks to our most merciful Father, that it hath pleased him to regenerate this infant with his Holy Spirit, to receive him for his own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into His holy church; and then speaks of every child so baptized, as now dead unto sin and living unto righteousness; as buried with Christ in his death, and now made partaker of the death of God's Son." This same Episcopal writer says, "He who runs may read this." That sundry of the *bishops and other clergy* in these United States publicly preach this same baptismal regeneration is well known.

These "Sponsors" also trouble me. I have carefully examined a quarto concordance, professing to give all the words of importance in the Bible, and yet I am not able to find that word *sponsor*, so much as once, nor any word answering to it; nor am I any more successful in my direct searches in the pages of Holy Scripture. That these sponsors too, can promise so positively for the child, that he shall "renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh; so that he will neither follow nor be led by them"—this is to me a mystery. I believe I have never heard of any method professing to give one person absolute power over the will of another except Animal Magnetism. In any view of the subject, that other persons should take upon them obligations, which—even if they could be discharged—would belong properly only to the parents, is exceedingly objectionable. I know, the parents shall be admitted as sponsors, if it be desired (may have the *privilege* of presenting their own children in baptism!) but it is very frequently not desired, and even when it is, the rubric requires one other person, as not less than three will answer, when "they can be had." So then, even when parents are admitted to present their children, they must be helped by somebody else, perhaps living a hundred miles distant, and who will

never see the child from the day of its baptism to its death! The whole arrangement, therefore, being totally unscriptural, repugnant to common sense, and the natural order of things, and freighted with gross error, I had much rather be without it.

5. *I do not find in the Bible any authority for the rite of Confirmation practised in the Episcopal church.* I do, indeed, find in the Scriptures the words “confirm, confirming, and confirmation,” but these appear to give but little countenance to the rite in use in the Episcopal church. In Acts xv. 32, we are told that “Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words and *confirmed* them,” and again v. 41, “he went through Syria and Cilicia *confirming* the churches;” and Acts xiv. 21, 22, “They returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, *confirming* the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” On these passages I would remark, 1. That the confirming here mentioned was the “instructing, encouraging, and establishing” these infant churches by the presence and personal counsels and labours of the apostles; so says Scott, an Episcopal commentator. 2. The persons here confirmed were the whole body of Christians making up these churches, and not merely particular individuals who were about to be received into their full privileges—“confirming *the churches;*” and 3. It appears from the last quoted passage that it was the *souls* of these Christians that were confirmed, and not their outward persons. *All* the confirmation mentioned in the New Testament certainly will not do for our Episcopal brethren. Thus Heb. vi. 16, it is said, “For men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for *confirmation* is an end of all strife;” but in such cases as this, I suppose it would be admitted, the bishop need not lay on his hands.

In regard to the authority for Confirmation, drawn from the laying on of hands by the apostles, I would remark, that if diocesan bishops will impart the Holy Ghost, in laying on their hands, as did the apostles, I should have no objection to the practice; but if they do not, then I may be excused for being incredulous as to their apostolic succession in this rite.

If any authority could be derived from the Scriptures,

the most favourable instance would be that in Acts viii. 15—17, "Who when they," (several of the apostles,) "were come down, prayed for them, (at Samaria,) that they might receive the Holy Ghost, (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." From this passage, however, we may learn that in order that the rite administered shall resemble what was done on this occasion, 1. the persons to be confirmed must not have previously received the Holy Ghost,—(this condition I am aware is frequently complied with in the Episcopal church;) 2, they *must* have received the Holy Ghost when the rite is finished, (this is certainly not *always* true of those confirmed by a diocesan bishop.) To confirm those who have already received the Holy Ghost, or to confirm those who have not, and still not impart the gift, or to confirm persons who never receive the Holy Ghost at all, either before or after, is certainly not to do what the apostles did.

On this passage, however, let us hear the good Episcopalian Dr. Scott. He says, "The rite of confirmation as practised by many Christian churches, has often been, and still is, spoken of *as a continuance of this apostolic imposition of hands*, for the confirmation of new converts by the Holy Spirit thus given to them. But *it is far from evident that this was done universally by the apostles*, or by those who succeeded them. As however miraculous powers rather than sanctifying grace were thus conferred; *unless miraculous powers are now connected with that rite, the parallel must wholly fail.*" Speaking of the great stress often laid on it in the Episcopal church, he says, "Doubtless it was at first *thus magnified in order to exalt the Episcopal order*, to whom the administration of it was confined, *as if they were entrusted with APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY.*" Unless, therefore, agreeably to the interpretation of this commentator, we can be shown that diocesan bishops impart miraculous gifts, or at least the graces of the Holy Spirit by laying on their hands, we should not be censured for concluding that they do not do, what the apostles did. If, therefore, some higher authority cannot be adduced, than has yet been offered, I must agree with Dr. Scott, that this rite has resulted in a great measure from a desire to magnify and "exalt the Episco-

pal office," and therefore reject it as having no foundation in the Scriptures.

6. *I am further quite at a loss to find in the Bible the feasts and fasts of the Episcopal Church.*

There were such things I know in the Jewish church; but our Episcopal brethren do not at least *profess* to be Jews. I know too, that there was a great disposition among the early Jewish converts to bring their feasts and fasts into the Christian church. Paul argues against this in Gal. iv. 9—11, where he says, "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you,* lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain;" and so also in various other places. If the Jewish festivals have been abrogated, then of course they ought not to be observed; but if they have not been abrogated, then the identical days should be kept, unless some scriptural warrant can be shown for the change; and we should thus have in the *Christian church* in addition to the Sabbath, *Jubilee, Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, Moon, Expiation, Tabernacles, Purim, and Dedication.* So that even going back among the Jews, we are as much at a loss as ever to find the festivals of the Book of Common Prayer.

In the "table of feasts to be observed in this (Protestant Episcopal) church, throughout the year," I count no less than twenty-seven holy-days in addition to "all Sundays." Amongst these are the "Conversion of St. Paul, The Purification of the Blessed Virgin, (!) St. Matthias the apostle, the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, (quite a favourite,) St. Barnabas, St. Michael and all angels, All Saints, the Holy Innocents," and so on. (Poor Jews! they are cast into the shade; twenty-seven to nine, three to one!*)

But whence came these twenty-seven feast days? Not from the Bible surely, for from the beginning of Genesis to the last of Revelation, I cannot discover so much as even the name of one of them; and indeed, wherever there is occasion to allude to any thing akin to these extra holy-days, they are discouraged. Reader! have you ever seen

* These feast days had fallen somewhat into disuse in past years. They have been of late extensively revived, however, by those who are "carrying out the principles of *the Church,*" and in many places we now have the whole of them.

a prayer book of the Church of Rome? Their list of the saints' days is indeed very long, and in this respect they have the advantage of the Episcopalians; but there is a remarkable resemblance in the lists so far as the shorter one goes, and a good deal of appearance of family connexion! Must we look to Rome for the paternity of these mysterious feast days? For the information of the curious, I may add, there are considerable marks of resemblance in other points between the books of these two churches.*

I have just picked up the Book of Common Prayer, and turning over the leaves at random, I read at the top of the pages "First Sunday in Advent, Fifth Sunday in Lent, Good Friday, Sunday after Ascension day, Ninth Sunday after Trinity," and so on. Truly, one who had been merely a simple reader of the Bible would not know exactly what to make of all this; in a book too, intended to be used in worship by persons professing to get their religion from the Word of God!

Indeed, taking the system of the Prayer Book as correct, I must conclude that a man who has nothing but the Bible would understand but in part the service that he owes to God. It is not enough, it seems, that he shall have a new heart, and possess the Christian graces, and be engaged in the duties of prayer, and reading and hearing the word, and practical labours to do good, he must find out the precise times and ways to do these things from the prayer book; he must learn part of his religion from Christ, and the other part from the "bishops, priests and deacons." Verily, if our Episcopal friends are right, those who live where there are no books of *Common Prayer*, or who do not use them, are in a sad condition. Good people, with pious intentions, may have really designed these additional times, and seasons, and ceremonies, as improvements to the plain and simple Bible, but the Church ought by this time to have seen enough of all such efforts to amend the inspired and sufficient word of God. We had better keep our religion as we find it in the infallible book of revela-

* No. 75 of the Oxford Tracts says, "Our own daily service is confessedly formed upon the Breviary, (Romish,) so that an inspection of the latter will be found materially to illustrate and explain our own Prayer-book." * * * "It may suggest moreover matter for our *private* devotions, over and above what our Reformers have thought fit to adopt into our public services; a use of it which will be but carrying out and completing what they have begun."

tion, though it may not then be one of great outward pomp and ceremony. We shall thus be on the most ancient, as well as the most honourable, and scriptural ground.

I will here give by way of information as to the origin of these feasts and ceremonies a passage from *Coleman's Antiquities*. "In course of time," says the author, "when Christianity was protected, and even adopted by the state, and opportunity was given of establishing public forms and ceremonies of worship, without fear or danger, and when it seemed expedient to recommend it to the favour of half converted pagans by outward pomp and circumstance, it was thought to be at once safe and seasonable to increase the number of sacred solemnities, both ordinary and extraordinary, to restore many parts of the Jewish ritual, and even to incorporate into the system of Christian worship, various rites and ceremonies from the customs of the declining pagan superstition," p. 443. As I can find no authority for these festivals, therefore, except in Pagan, Jewish, and Romish ceremonies, I must reject all such days as unscriptural and dangerous innovations in the Christian Church.

7. *I may add to the reasons already assigned, that I do not consider diocesan Episcopal Church-government, suited to a republican country.*

It is exceedingly high toned, aristocratic and monarchical. "No bishop, no king," was king James's well-known, favourite maxim.—A late eloquent writer says, "It is notorious that in England, High Churchism and Toryism have for centuries gone hand in hand; and advocates of an exclusive divine right in prelacy are also with rare exceptions, in favour of a strong aristocratic government in the State. Witness the high-handed and persecuting career of that arch-traitor and arch-bigot Laud, archbishop of Canterbury. Witness the usurpation of the pseudo-martyr Charles I., than whom no traitor ever deserved the scaffold more richly. Witness the bloody attempt to dragoon Scotland into Episcopacy, under the covenant-breaker Charles II. It is calculated that at least *eight thousand* persons died in prison in England alone, not to reckon the many slain in Scotland, because of their refusal to submit to the acts of conformity."—*Dr. Bethune's Sermon*.

The same writer quotes Wm. B. Reed, Esq., of Philadelphia, as having said in a published address, in speaking

of the American Revolution, "Patriotic clergymen of the Established Church were *exceptions* to general conduct." "It is a sober judgment, that had Independence and its maintenance depended on the approval and ready sanction of the colonial Episcopal clergy, misrule and oppression must have become far more intense, before they would have seen a cause of justifiable rebellion. The debt of gratitude which independent America owes to the dissenting clergy and laity never can be paid." It would be easy to adduce authority to a very great extent to confirm the truth of this position; but a point so well established and so naturally issuing from the inherent principles of diocesan episcopacy needs nothing further. What may be the meaning of the persevering efforts of this same Episcopal Church of late, to secure exclusive control over various national and state institutions, and over the religious instruction of the Army and Navy, I leave for others to determine. Being a republican from principle, I must reject aristocratic and monarchical Episcopacy.

8. *Finally, I must say I should be unwilling to go with the Episcopal Church to its present apparent destination.* That this Church never was sufficiently reformed has been always believed by very many good people, and that its present tendencies prove this, is to them equally obvious. Messrs. Newman, Pusey & Co. with some of their compeers, the "Right Reverend fathers in God, Lord Bishops" in these United States, are certainly doing wonders towards a re-union with their "holy mother of Rome." We have already alluded to some progress made in this way by the substitution of ceremonies for preaching. The late Rev. Mr. Froude of Oxford says, "You will be shocked at my avowal that I am every day becoming a less and less loyal son of the Reformation. I think people are injudicious who talk against the Roman Catholics for worshipping saints and honouring the virgin and images." "Really I hate the Reformation and the reformers more and more." "It is necessary," says another of these Episcopal Oxford gentlemen, "to reject entirely and to anathematize the principle of Protestantism, as being that of a heresy, with all its forms, its sects and its denominations." No. 75 of the *Tracts for the Times*, recommends the use of a prayer beginning, "HOLY MARY and all saints intercede for us to the Lord," &c. But why should I detain

the reader, when it is well known that the Tract No. 90, contends for almost every principle of Popery. Those who wish to investigate this point more fully, and indeed the whole subject of prelacy, would do well to avail themselves of that very able work "Smyth on the Apostolic Succession," to which I am indebted for several quotations.

The *London Christian Observer*, an evangelical Church of England periodical, says, "Oxford tract doctrine is popery divested of its most astounding results," and that if these doctrines prevail, there must be a second reformation in the Church of England. "It is," they continue, "afflicting beyond expression to see our Protestant church, and in times like these, agitated by the revival of these *worst figments of the darkest ages of papal superstition*:" and it then goes on to speak of "these vain and baneful absurdities of popery overrunning the spot where Cranmer and Latimer shed their blood for the pure gospel of Christ."

The *London Patriot*, of late date, after informing us that the Rev. Mr. Oakley of St. Margaret's, Cavendish Square, London, "has long been known to have had an altar in his church fitted up in Roman Catholic style," then goes on to say, "We are getting on in ecclesiastical matters; candles on the altar have become the order of the day, now that the bishop of London's sanction has been given to the practice. In Shoreditch church we understand the antics of the Puseyite priests are attracting great numbers to the Sunday morning exhibitions; but on Sunday week, when the candles were brought in and other ceremonies were about to be performed, a considerable number of the more pious part of the congregation rose and left the church. To what these things will grow it is impossible to say. Puseyism finding nothing to check its progress within the establishment, is assuming every day a bolder tone. Apart from its mummeries, it is essentially a struggle for power; and now openly aspires to dictate to the state."

I have now before me (March, 1843,) an article just come to hand from the *London Church Intelligencer*, a Puseyite Church of England paper, proposing a plan for the re-establishment of monasteries and convents in England! It is headed "*Revival of Monastic and Conventual Institutions on a plan adapted to the exigencies of the Reformed Catholic Church in England.*" The reader may perhaps need to be informed that this "Reformed

Catholic Church" is no more nor less than the national Episcopal Church of England and Ireland. The article says, "Perhaps the best model for such establishments might be the monastery of Port Royal des Champs," and then goes on to give an outline of the objects to be thereby attained, answering to the arguments generally used for popish establishments of the same sort.

If any one has a lingering doubt that this same Puseyism or disguised popery is getting possession of the Episcopal Church in this country, he need only look occasionally into the weekly issues of some of the most popular organs of that denomination; one of these, too, bearing the perpetual endorsement of one of the highest dignitaries in that whole Church.

Indeed when bishop Whittingham can say in a published sermon that "baptism washes away the sins of those who come to Christ, and that the bread and wine used in the Lord's Supper "is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ," and when the *New York Churchman* can say this is "wholesome doctrine," we need go but little further to find out what sort of leaven is at work.

The *Episcopal Recorder* of Philadelphia, said not long since, "We have seen of late, theories advocated and set forth in institution and consecration sermons, that cannot fail to lead all who would keep our *Protestant Episcopal Church as she is*, to sorrow and mourn."

A writer some time before, in the same paper, after enumerating the heads of the Oxford Puseyite system, says, "Beloved brethren of the church, (Episcopal,) what think you of some of these propositions? Can you believe that they are openly propagated by a periodical of the Church, to each number of which is attached the official sanction of the bishop of the diocese, by way of a standing advertisement!!! and he too a professor in the General Theological Seminary, an institution to which the whole church in these United States sends its candidates for orders, to be instructed in the doctrines and principles of the Church? Is there nothing alarming here?" Add to this the disuse to a very great extent, and in some cases the repudiation of the title *Protestant Episcopal Church*, the very contemptuous language against movements in behalf of Protestantism from high places, the revival of before almost obsolete popish festivals, the passion for vestments and

crosses, the arrogant assumptions and exclusiveness with regard to other denominations, the arrangement in some churches of "the altars as in Roman Catholic churches," and even the candles, and we have a very fair prospect for the return—and that before a great while—of the truant Episcopal daughter to the maternal embraces of the papacy.*

* Since the first edition of this tract was published, the progress towards Rome in some portions of the Episcopal Church, seems to have even outstripped the expectations of those who were looking with most certainty for such an ultimate result. On the 2d of July, 1843, Bishop Onderdonk, of New York, ordained a young Mr. Carey, who deliberately and after full opportunity of reflection, avowed that "If union with the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church were not open to him, he might possibly have recourse to the ministry of Rome; that he did not deem the differences between us (the Episcopalians) and Rome to be such as embraced *any points of faith*;" that he "was not prepared to pronounce the doctrine of transubstantiation *an absurd or impossible doctrine*;" that he "does not object to the Romish doctrine of purgatory as defined by the council of Trent;" nor to prayers for the dead, nor to the reception of the Apocryphal books as part of the Scriptures; that he "was not prepared to say whether the Church of Rome or the Anglican (Episcopal) Church were the more pure;" that he "admits to have said, or thinks it likely he has said, inasmuch as he so believes, that *the Reformation from Rome was an unjustifiable act, and followed by many grievous and lamentable results*." These sentiments were fully made known to the bishop, who, notwithstanding, ordained him a minister in the *Protestant Episcopal Church*! The Episcopal Convention of New York soon after fully sustained the bishop in his course, and he, during that convention, having come into violent collision with some of the more Protestant members of the body, was on the ensuing day waited on by sixty of his clergy, who testified their approbation of his course, kneeled at his feet, and received his blessing! This is marching towards Rome in double quick time.

The Hon. Wm. Jay, of New York, who "was born and educated in the Episcopal Church," and who seems to consider himself thoroughly identified with its interests, having some time since refused to subscribe to the erection of a new Episcopal Church, gives his reasons for so doing in a letter which has just been published. Among other things, he says, "We are by name a *PROTESTANT Church*,—yet with a powerful party among us the word *Protestant* has become a proverb and reproach." * * "When I witness the unceasing and violent struggle to add strange doctrines to our faith and foolish mummeries to our worship, and remember *who* are engaged in it, I cannot avoid apprehending its ultimate success, and I am compelled to ask myself how far I can lawfully aid in the extension of a church, which I am constrained to admit *is daily becoming more and more corrupt*. Hence I have for some time past refrained

All things considered, therefore, I think I am much better satisfied out of the Protestant Episcopal Church, than if I were in it; especially since if I were there, I should not know how soon I might find both myself and my church at Rome.

In regard to the claim of the Episcopal Church to be the only genuine apostolic church, I will only remark in view of what has been said, that if a very consistent doing what the apostles did not, and leaving undone what the apostles did, can substantiate this claim, then it must be admitted to be valid. The reader, however, may by this time, see with how much propriety those in this position call themselves "THE CHURCH" and their bishops "successors of the apostles," and denounce all other denominations, however holy, useful, and scriptural, as "dissenters," and their ministers as "laymen," and deny to them all churchship and ordinances, and consign them to the "uncovenanted mercies of God!"

In conclusion, I would simply suggest to my Episcopal friends, that if the time and efforts now devoted to making proselytes, were appropriated to purifying their own Church, and to the use of means for saving sinners, the labour would be more honourably and more profitably expended, and they might then have more members and of a better sort, than the discontented ones, who can be picked off from other denominations.

from giving money for any church (Episcopal) purposes except under such circumstances as warranted the belief, that it would tend to advance the genuine doctrines of our church." * * "On the whole, I am irresistibly brought to the conclusion that *our church has reached a crisis, that it cannot remain as it is, that it is in a transition state, and must be purified or corrupted or divided.* No one acquainted with the present state of things can venture to deny that *within one or two years*, some reviler of the Reformation, some anathematizer of Protestantism, some glorifier of Tradition as the rule of Faith, may proclaim from the pulpit at Northcastle (the church proposed to be built) dogmas, for opposing which, my own ancestors were driven from their native land by Popish persecution." This letter, Judge Jay also remarks, "was written six months *before the Carey ordination.*" "That act," he says, "was but the legitimate effect of the 'strange doctrines' to which I referred, and it caused *me* but little surprise."

POSTSCRIPT.

THE Hon. T. Babington Macaulay, himself a member of the Church of England, thus speaks on the subject of apostolical succession:—"Whether we consider the palpable absurdity of this doctrine, its utter destitution of historic evidence, or the outrage it implies on all Christian charity, it is equally revolting. The arguments against it are infinite, the evidence for it absolutely nothing. It rests not upon one doubtful assumption, but fifty, and when these are compounded together, according to Whately's receipt for gauging the force of arguments, it defies the power of any calculus invented by man, to determine the ratio of improbability." * * * "What bishop can be sure that he and his predecessors in the same line have been duly consecrated? or what presbyter, that he was ordained by a bishop who had a right to ordain him?" * * "We can imagine the perplexity of a presbyter thus cast in doubt as to whether or not he has ever had the invaluable 'gift' of apostolical succession conferred upon him. As that 'gift' is neither tangible nor visible, the subject neither of experience nor consciousness;—as it cannot be known by any 'effects' produced by it, (for that mysterious efficacy which attends the administration of rites at its possessor's hands, is, like the gift which qualifies him to administer them, also invisible and intangible,)—he may imagine, unhappy man! that he has been 'regenerating' infants by baptism, when he has been simply sprinkling them with water. 'What is the matter?' the spectator of his distractions might ask. 'What have you lost?' 'Lost!' would be the reply, 'I fear I have lost my apostolical succession, or rather, my misery is that I do not know and cannot tell whether I ever had it to lose!' It is of no use here to suggest the usual questions, 'When did you see it last?' 'When were you last conscious of possessing it?' What a peculiar property is that of which though so invaluable—

may, on which the whole efficacy of the Christian ministry depends—a man has no positive evidence to show whether he ever had it or not! which, if ever conferred, was conferred without his knowledge, and which, if it could be taken away, would still leave him ignorant, not only when, where, and how the theft was committed, but whether it had ever been committed or not? The sympathizing friend might, probably, remind him, that as he was not sure he had ever had it, so, *perhaps*, he still had it without knowing it. ‘*Perhaps!*’ he would reply; ‘but it is certainty I want.’”

THE END.

H I S T O R Y

OF A

CHURCH IN THE SOUTH.

BY THE

REV. N. HOYT, D.D.



PHILADELPHIA :

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.

HISTORY

OF A

CHURCH IN THE SOUTH.



IN January, 1826, the writer of this article, having been driven by disease from a northern to a southern clime, by invitation visited the then destitute congregation of B. I. in South Carolina. All was moral dearth and desolation. While it was easy to collect on the Sabbath, a large and respectable congregation of attentive hearers, there was no organized church of any denomination; there was no Sabbath school; not a praying man in the place; family prayer unknown, except as, in two or three instances, conducted by females; the Sabbath awfully desecrated by visiting and other recreations; profane language among a certain class common; intemperance truly alarming, and evidently on the increase; the religious education of the young almost totally neglected, with the happy exception of two families; while there was no counteracting influence, except what was found in the general morality of some of the people, and the pious lives and fervent prayers of two or three females. For about four months I laboured, preaching the Gospel, conducting a newly organized Bible class, visiting from house to house, distributing tracts, praying with and for the people. But, apparently, I laboured in vain. While I was treated with great kindness and hospitality, and the message which I delivered was listened to with respect, not a sinner was convicted or converted; no one turned from his sins to seek the living God.

All things apparently remained as they were, with one exception—the congregations on the Sabbath had increased.

During the summer I was absent, and the people heard very little preaching till my return early in December. When I resumed my labours, it was with increased zeal and energy. But after labouring four or five months longer, with the exception of a flourishing Sabbath school, (the first that was ever organized in the place,) very little, if any thing, could be seen to encourage hope or to strengthen faith. In the house of God, there was often solemnity and feeling; but out of it, there was apparently neither. A spirit of profound and deep spiritual sleep appeared to have been poured out upon the people.

Thus matters continued, till a lovely southern spring opened upon us in all its wonted charms. The loud and sweet carols of the mocking bird, the soothing voice of the turtle dove, with the thousand varied notes of other feathered songsters, resounding through the blooming forests, told plainly that winter was past and gone, and that spring had come. All was cheerfulness and gaiety. The very appearance of nature seemed calculated to clothe every countenance with smiles. But there was one who was far from being happy; one, whom no music of nature, nor kindness of friends could cheer; one, from whose eyes sleep departed at night, and upon whose mind there daily rested a mountain pressure, which no one but the Almighty could remove. It was the preacher. God made him feel most intensely for the thoughtless multitudes around him, who were living without hope. He was made to see as clearly as in the blaze of the noonday sun, that the people with whom he was labouring were going to hell. This impression was as vividly imprinted upon his mind, as if written there with the lightning's point. This deep, *awful* impression weighed down his spirit, till a blooming world appeared like a howling desert. He toiled and wept, preached and prayed, for weeks and months together. But there was neither voice nor hearing. The cold moral winter still continued, with little or no abatement of its frosts or its chills. A valley of dry blanched bones was all that could be seen. Faith was put to the utmost test. I saw that all were lost unless God interposed. "Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon." But at length when hope seemed ready to depart,—“A star arose.”—“It was the star of Bethlehem.” God spoke

and the people heard. A deep and awful solemnity came over them. They began to feel. The Holy Ghost breathed upon the valley, and the dry bones began to move, to tremble, and to shake. I thanked God and took courage. While memory lasts, I shall not forget the interesting moment, when just at the close of a Bible class exercise, the first anxious sinner, (the mother of a large family,) inquired of me what she should do to be saved. The night of more than one hundred years was now drawing to a close; the day was dawning; the sun was rising. More than a century had rolled away since the place was first settled; and yet such a thing as a prayer meeting in that neighbourhood had never been known. I appointed the first at a private house, which was well attended and solemn. I appointed another at a different house, which was of so extraordinary a character, that it deserves special notice. Soon after the exercises began, I arose, and as nearly as I can recollect, remarked in substance to the people, as follows:—"You have long been listening to a preached gospel, and as yet have done nothing but sin. You have not taken the first step towards salvation. You do not appear even to have resolved in the fear of God to seek religion, or to give your hearts to the Saviour. Were you to be called upon to-day to say whether you will seek in good earnest, I know not that you are prepared to say that you will. I do not now make such a proposition, (though I may probably before we close,) but if I *were* to call upon all those in the room, who feel determined to seek the Lord, to rise from their seats, would any body be prepared deliberately to take such a step?"

Most unexpectedly to me, a lady arose, deliberately approached me, and extending her hand, said with great solemnity of manner, "Mr. H. I *will* seek the Lord." The Holy Ghost instantly fell on all those that heard. Every individual in the room arose, and many of them gathered around me, weeping and sobbing aloud. I stood amazed, and could for a few moments say very little. A more solemn scene I never saw, and never expect to see on this side of the judgment bar. I requested them to resume their seats, which they did. This was not mere animal feeling; nothing had been done to produce that. It was the power of God. Every individual that arose on that occasion, obtained a hope of having past from death unto life. From the time of this Pentecostal sea-

son, the good work progressed powerfully. On the Sabbath the house of God was filled to overflowing; some of the people coming ten or fifteen miles to attend service.

Such was the solemnity that reigned through the congregation, even before service began, that the man must have been exceedingly hardened, who could have stepped within doors and cast his eyes over the people, and not have felt that he was treading on holy ground. Cases of intense conviction multiplied rapidly.

The old, gray headed, intemperate, profane, hardened sinner, who had lived fifty years or more without God in the world; the moral man, with all his self-righteousness; Sabbath breakers, profane swearers, intemperate people; young men, and young ladies in the bloom of life; the bride and the groom, parents and children, husbands and wives, superintendents, teachers and scholars in the Sabbath school, masters, mistresses, and servants, were all weeping together.

And yet the work was remarkably silent: the waters were noiseless, but they flowed deep. During divine service nothing could be heard but the voice of the preacher, except that occasionally, perhaps an involuntary sob would break upon the ear, which carried with it its own apology. We held no protracted meetings; and the artificial means, now so popular in many places, were not known among us. The ordinary means were used, and God abundantly blessed them. The whole place was agitated and moved. Some asked (for they had never before witnessed a revival), "What do these things mean?" Others mocking, said, "These men have been frightened." But God carried on his work with great power. Those who came to mock, would go away to weep and to pray.

Convictions were remarkably deep and pungent; in a few instances truly awful. In some cases the hearts of the anxious would rise against God in the most fearful manner, and then the horrors of despair would settle down upon their souls. Some of their countenances, as they thus appeared in their mental agonies (nearly fifteen years ago), are now vividly before the mind of the writer.

But God did not leave them in their darkness and gloom. He who had begun a good work carried it on. The notes of gratitude and of triumphant praise were soon

heard from the joyful lips of many: joy and gladness appeared, and sorrow and sighing fled away. The Holy Ghost led the people to the Lamb of God, who took away their sins—"The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous."—Many houses are at once converted into Bethels—Ten or twelve family altars are erected, around which pious households bow, and offer up their morning and evening devotions—Eighteen or nineteen heads of families, two superintendents, thirteen or fourteen teachers, and five scholars in the Sabbath school, are among those who rejoice in hope of pardoning mercy.

The good work gradually and powerfully progressed through a great part of the summer, till we were able to number about forty, who gave evidence of having passed from death unto life.

On the second Sabbath in August of that year (1827), Rev. Mr. D. assisted the writer in organizing the Presbyterian church of B. I. A ruling elder (Dr. N.) was ordained, and the church being regularly constituted, between thirty and forty professed followers of Jesus (most of them for the first time) sat down to commemorate the dying love of their Saviour in a house, and upon a spot, where a similar scene had never before been witnessed. The ordinance of baptism was administered to nine grown persons, and soon afterwards to twenty-five children.

The next year, the writer having been called to another field of labour, this "little flock" were left much of the time destitute. But whether they had a preacher with them or not, they regularly met both on the Sabbath and on Wednesdays for the worship of God. If they had no preacher they read a sermon, and sang and prayed together. This has been the practice of that church for nearly fifteen years; and the result has been, that she has flourished and prospered, and she has appeared fair and green like an oasis in a desert, while many other destitute churches, adopting a different course, have long since become lifeless or extinct.

No church within my knowledge places a higher estimate upon the labours and the gift of a good minister, than the church of B. I. But if denied the blessing of a pastor, still they meet often and speak one to another, and the Lord hearkens and hears, answers and blesses. They have enjoyed sweet refreshing seasons from the presence of the Lord, which have resulted in valuable acquisitions

to their numbers. They have recently erected a neat commodious house of worship, and dedicated it to the service of God.

A few cases of individuals deserve notice. Dr. N. having been reared by pious parents (in a distant part of the state), is a moral, upright, educated man. He appears favourable to religion; but when the prayer meetings are appointed at private houses, he violently opposes the step, and sends a message to the preacher, that he hopes he will consent to appoint all his meetings in the church. This request, though treated with respect, is not complied with, and Dr. N. yields the point, deeply regretting that he ever made it. He soon has enough to attend to at home; he is seen literally writhing like a worm in the vine, under the arrows of the Almighty. His case excites great interest in the neighbourhood. Something whispers—"Pray in your family." But he thinks he cannot. He hesitates. But at length he yields; he takes up the cross and goes forward. God blesses him. He becomes a happy man. He dedicates soul and body, talents and influence, to the service of God. He is ordained the first ruling elder in the Church, and when they are destitute of a preacher, he takes the lead in their devotions, and keeps the little flock together. But he ripens fast for heaven. In a few years his work is done on earth, and well done. He is called home. He dies a most triumphant death, bearing testimony by signs, when he can no longer speak, that sweet peace reigns within.

A. A.—a man of respectable connexions, naturally amiable and kind hearted. He attends church on Sabbath, and has, perhaps, some feeling, but suppresses it. He resists conviction and grieves the spirit. He lives through the revival and is left a stupid, hardened sinner. He falls into intemperate habits. Years pass away, and another revival comes. He is powerfully affected, falls down upon his knees in prayer meetings, and requests Christians to pray for him. He obtains some relief, joins a Baptist church, goes on awhile, and is turned out. Again he is roused, deeply affected, and appears to repent. He joins a Methodist church, retains his connexion there awhile, and is turned out. His old enemy, intemperance, overcomes him, and proves his ruin. Riding home one evening from the house of a beloved sister, while intoxicated, he is suddenly thrown from his horse

and against a tree, a very few yards from that church in which the writer had so many times warned him, and is instantly killed.

C. N.—a man of respectable connexions, and brother-in-law of the preceding, attends church on Sunday during the revival, appears to have some feeling, but resists every thing like conviction; goes through the révival, and is given up to hardness of heart and to intemperate habits. A few years rapidly pass away, and while one day he is attending public speaking in a school, and playing upon the violin, without a moment's warning, in an instant he is senseless, and in a few hours a lifeless corpse; his wife is a widow, and his children orphans.

Mr. —, a man of wealth and influence, has no objections to his wife's becoming pious, none to the meetings on Sundays, regularly attends, is a good friend and liberal supporter of the minister, and really thinks himself a good man. But good as he is, he is violently opposed to the weekly prayer meetings. He will not go near them. He is most powerfully wrought upon by the Spirit of God. But he thinks it stooping too low to go to a weekly prayer meeting—*he will not go*. He lives through the revival, and although amiable, becomes hardened and stupid. A few years roll on, and another blessed refreshing season cheers the hearts of Zion's friends. As formerly, prayer meetings are the great barrier in the way of Mr. —. *He will not attend*. But on a pleasant evening he is returning, all alone from his plantation. He is in a reflecting mood. A thought occurs—God *can* make me attend these prayer meetings; and perhaps he will make me do it. He may take away my favourite little son T. in order to bring me down. The very thought is too much. He puts spurs to his horse, and rides on rapidly home to see if the child is well. He finds the little boy in health, and becomes calm. But that very night God smites the child, this darling of its father, with mortal sickness. For a day or two the loved one languishes and suffers, and pines away: and at length it is actually expiring before the eyes of the agonized father.

He can keep silence no longer; he speaks out and says, "I am doing this—God is killing my child, because I would not go to the prayer meetings." The child dies, but the father lives. He immediately becomes an humble,

active Christian, and soon afterward is chosen an elder in the church.

Mr. —, an amiable young man, attends the meetings, is powerfully affected, and feels that religion is truly the one thing needful. But he has an enemy in the settlement whom he cannot or will not forgive. He is told that he must forgive; or God will not forgive him—he cannot be saved. But he says he cannot: he hates with perfect hatred. The struggle is a hard one, and results in his being left out of the kingdom. His wife enters, but he is left. He yields to habits of intemperance, becomes hardened and stupid, and appears to be lost. Thus he goes on till the second revival, when again he is awakened. His eyes are opened to see his lost condition, and that the passing season is his harvest time. He yields. He can forgive all enemies, as he hopes to be forgiven of God. He takes a firm stand, comes out decidedly on the Lord's side, and in due time he is made an elder in the church,

Reflections. What a demon is intemperance! In by-gone days it has slain its scores, if not its hundreds, at B. I. It has there murdered fathers, husbands, and young men. It has made young and blooming wives weeping widows, and their little ones unprotected orphans. It has entered the sanctuary, and torn its unhappy victim from his knees before the altar of God, and instantly hurled him out of life and into the presence of his Maker.

2. What a blessing is a free circulation of tracts! Very many of the excellent tracts of the American Tract Society were circulated at B. I. previous to and during the revival described above, and next to the preaching of the gospel, I know of nothing which exerted a more salutary or powerful influence. Happy is the man who wrote the tract, entitled, "The Way to be Saved." Two of the converts at B. I. (one of them is now a minister of the gospel) found peace while reading that tract.

3. Let no minister of the gospel who is labouring faithfully, ever yield to despondency. He may be sowing seed which shall ultimately spring up and bring forth fruit unto eternal life. Several good brethren (some of them now in heaven) had at different times laboured at B. I., apparently with little or no success; but it was pleasant to observe, in the progress of the revival, that even those brethren had not altogether laboured in vain. Now and then an impression was made, though the preacher knew it

not. True, most of the seed was picked up by the fowls of heaven: but here and there a grain lay deposited beneath the soil, which germinated and sprang up after, perhaps, the hand which scattered it was cold in death. The deepest darkness may be but the harbinger of a glorious day.

THE END.

12

THE

IMMEDIATE CHOICE.

BY THE

REV. A. ALEXANDER, D.D.

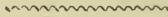
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THE

IMMEDIATE CHOICE.



Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.

WHEN Joshua was advanced in years, and the time drew near in which he should be gathered to his fathers, he assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, that he might give them his last advice before his departure out of the world. After reciting a brief history of God's dealings with their nation from the time of Abraham to the time then present, he concludes with this solemn exhortation; "Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth. Put away all false gods, and serve Jehovah." And, "If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, CHOOSE YE THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE."

The first thing, in these words, which claims our attention is, that Joshua addresses the people as free agents, having power to choose and refuse. If man were not a free agent; if he were compelled to act in despite of his own will; if he were merely a creature of necessity, then all exhortation would be useless—would be mockery. On this subject the sacred Scriptures agree with our own experience. We all have an invincible consciousness of freedom. This knowledge is not acquired from the instruction of others, nor by a process of reasoning, but is self-evident and undeniable. By subtle reasonings men may endeavour to convince us that we are not free, but are mere machines; or that our feelings and character are necessarily produced by the objects around us, and by the circumstances in which we are placed; but even if we should be

unable to unravel their sophistry, we still continue to believe and act as free agents, and we cannot avoid it. No reasonings can be valid which contradict our intuitive perceptions of truth. Men may make out a plausible argument to prove that there is no sun nor moon in the heavens, and neither rock nor tree, nor any thing else, upon earth; but common people will choose to believe their own senses, rather than the conclusions of metaphysical reasoning. Just so every man knows and feels that he is an accountable creature. Those men, therefore, who are carried away with such notions as those with which many in our day are deluded, are wilfully deceived. Because they love not the truth, they are given up to believe a lie. In regard to the great first principles of truth, the unlearned stand on equal ground with the philosopher. These truths are not only level to his capacity, but are as evident to his mind as the shining of the sun at mid-day. It is egregious folly to listen to any arguments which have for their object to disprove any intuitive maxim or principle; because the basis on which all reasoning rests is some first principle intuitively discerned; and, of course, no reasoning founded on such a principle can disprove another truth of which we have the same intuitive certainty. There are some errors, therefore, which we cannot sincerely believe if we would; and that man is not a free, accountable agent, is one of this class. Even they who pretend to believe it are obliged to think and act contrary to their professed opinion every hour of the day. No man can uniformly believe that he is not an accountable agent. When we hear men assert that they are not free, we believe that they contradict the intimate convictions of their own minds: or, if some do truly believe in such absurdities, they are given up to believe a lie.

Philosophers may dispute about the nature of human liberty; but with these disputes common people have very little to do. They know the fact, and that is enough. Few people understand how it is that the food which they eat nourishes them; but their ignorance here does not prevent their digestion. Let all men hold fast what they do know, and not be driven from these safe moorings by the sophistical arts of designing or wicked men, who wish to draw disciples after them.

It cannot be denied, however, that there are several important principles included in the truth, that man is a free, moral agent; as that he is a rational creature, and that he discerns the difference between right and wrong. A per-

fect idiot, or a perfect maniac, is not accountable. He is an agent, and may be called a free agent, but not a moral and accountable agent. A dog, a horse, and an elephant, are agents, and possess a certain degree of liberty; that is, are governed by inclination and will; but they cannot be moral agents, because they have no moral faculty. They discern nothing of the distinction between right and wrong. They have no feeling of moral obligation. A tiger perceives no difference between tearing to pieces a human being, and a lamb or deer. Man, as an accountable being, feels that his actions are his own, that they originate in his own mind.

Men being endowed with freedom, God calls upon them to exercise their choice. He would not have them to serve Him by compulsion, or reluctantly, but will have a willing obedience, or He will accept of none. He requires all men, therefore, to determine whom they will serve. Not that it is a matter of indifference whether men serve God or not, for their salvation depends upon it: but He would have men to make their own election, and abide the consequences.

In the case before us, Joshua, an inspired man, proposes to the Israelites to make their choice between the service of Jehovah and of idols. Much in the same manner, some hundreds of years afterwards, Elijah urged the assembled tribes of Israel to come to a decision whom they would serve. "How long," said he, "halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (1 Kings xviii. 21.) Owing to the blessed influence of Christianity, gross idolatry is not known among us; at least among Protestant Christians. But the nature of man is not changed. He is still, by nature, alienated from God, and delights not in his service; but makes to himself idols, by setting his affections supremely on the world, loving the creature more than the Creator, who is God blessed forevermore. The apostle Paul declares, that "covetousness is idolatry." And whether we can substantiate the charge of idolatry against men or not, it matters little; for by nature they are still "children of wrath" as really as their forefathers. They are now as prone to depart from the living God as ever. They still follow the old trade of "forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns than can hold no water."

The world, in its three potent aspects of wealth, honour, and pleasure, is the object of affection and pursuit to a very

large majority of men. Yet many are in a state of vacillation. They are halting between God and mammon. They are convinced, in judgment and conscience, that the service of Jehovah is the best, and the only service which they are under any moral obligation to observe; but their taste and inclinations lead them another way. They cannot be persuaded to give up the world as their portion—their chief good. They plead, at any rate, for a little delay. They are willing to promise, that hereafter they will devote themselves to the service of God. But God accepts no vows of this kind. Indeed, they are an insult to the divine Majesty. It is as much as to say, “we prefer the pleasures of sin to thy service; but as we cannot be happy without thy favour, we will indulge ourselves for a season in the world, and then, at some late period, we will engage in thy service.” Such a spirit the Lord detests. He says, he would that we should be either hot or cold; for as for the lukewarm, he will spew them out of his mouth. He insists, therefore, on a decided course, and that promptly—“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” But when men are called upon to choose, they are permitted to deliberate. A hasty, precipitate decision, is not the thing desired. The Lord Jesus exhorted his hearers, and us, of course, to “count the cost.” Unless this choice is made deliberately, and upon a full view of what is to be lost as well as gained by the course we pursue, our religion will be temporary and unsteady. Christ held out no flattering worldly baits to allure men to become his disciples. So far from this, he makes self-denial and bearing the cross the very first step in following him; and his terms of discipleship are so high, that if any man loves father or mother, wife or children, yea, or his own life, more than him, he cannot be his disciple. Let every man, then, impartially view both sides, and then make his decision. And that you may be aided in coming to a just conclusion, let us consider what we may hope to gain by choosing the world, and then what advantages the choice of God and his service will bring with it.

By choosing the world you will obviously have this advantage, that the objects of your affection and pursuit are visible and near at hand. You will not have to trust to the testimony of others for their existence, nor to wait until you reach another state of being before you can obtain the possessions and have the enjoyment of them.

A second consideration favourable to the pursuit of worldly instead of heavenly objects is, that you will be in

no danger of being singular, which exposes one to ridicule. You will be kept in countenance by a multitude who have the same objects of pursuit : and among these will be found most of the rich and powerful. Even kings, nobles, and men distinguished in the departments of war and of science, will, for the most part, be your companions. This consideration, whatever weight it may have when weighed in the balance of reason, has, in fact, a powerful influence on the minds of many, especially the young. While they find themselves with the multitude, and following the steps of those who are considered the rich and honourable in the world, they feel little inclined to change their course. Even if it could be shown, by the strongest reasons, that this choice is not a wise one, yet as long as the votary of the world is surrounded by the wealthy, the fashionable, and the powerful, he will be little disposed to pay much attention to the voice of sober reason. He will rather laugh at her dictates, or scorn her unwelcome intrusion to disturb his repose. It is hard to stem the stream, but easy to swim with it. He who chooses the world as his portion, escapes the trouble of changing his course ; he has only to glide along the current which bears along with it nearly all around him. This way is not only broad but descending. Besides, the favour and friendship of the world may be expected by those who cast in their lot with its votaries, according to that maxim of our Saviour, " If ye were of the world, the world would love its own." Similarity of sentiments, affections, and pursuits, produces a mutual liking ; and there can be no doubt but that the man devoted to worldly pursuits will be more likely to obtain a share of the honours, emoluments, and rewards, which the world has to bestow, than one of an opposite character. All aspirants, it is true, cannot be satisfied. The world is not wide enough nor rich enough to gratify the desires and wishes of all who are competitors for her good things. And it cannot be denied, that of those who run in this race there are but few successful, while many meet with a sad disappointment. It is remarkable, however, that in the pursuit of the world, the failure of one or many does not discourage others : no, nor are they convinced of the unsatisfactory nature of their pursuits by their own frequent failures. They attribute their want of success to something wrong in the process, and go back and begin again. It is also a thing which ought not to be concealed, that the competitors for worldly honours, power, and wealth, often come

into collision, and jostle one another without exercising much delicacy or reserve. No one is troubled to see a rival cast down to the ground; and when he is down, it will not be surprising if he is trodden in the dust, if he is the least in the way of the more successful competitors. In consequence of these things, it does sometimes happen, that persons who had given up all their prospects in the world to come, for the sake of this present world, are at last disappointed in all their sanguine hopes, and thus lose all prospect of happiness in both worlds. In candour it ought also to be mentioned, that many, for the want of religious principle, have been led to such acts of fraud and injustice, and to such indulgences, as have utterly ruined their prospects of earthly prosperity: so that though it may be true, that the man who makes the world his supreme object of pursuit, may commonly rise higher than the religious man who views it as a subordinate object, yet the latter occupies a much safer condition; and possessing moderate desires, is likely, with less of worldly goods, to enjoy more happiness than the mere man of the world.

In the view of men of earthly desires and tastes, it cannot but appear a great advantage, that they are free from the restraints of religion; which to men of their feelings must be extremely irksome. The servant of God is under a constant restraint in regard to many things, in which worldly men place no small part of their enjoyment. Not only must he avoid scenes of riot and debauchery, but he is required by the rules of religion, and by public opinion, to abstain from attendance on fashionable amusements. To him, the theatre, the ball-room, the billiard and card tables, are prohibited places. Besides, he is expected to be constant in attendance on religious duties, both publicly and privately. Now it cannot be doubted, that you could scarcely devise a more painful penance for a gay devotee of pleasure, or for an avaricious or ambitious man, than to confine him to assemblies where God is worshipped, and religion inculcated. The man who chooses this world as his portion, also escapes all the persecution and obloquy which to this day, more or less, follow those who "will live godly in Christ Jesus." Indeed, we are informed from infallible authority, that through much tribulation Christians must enter the kingdom; and Christ himself says to his disciples "in the world, ye shall have tribulation." Some professors, indeed, endeavour to unite the service of God and the ardent pursuit of the riches, honours and pleasures

of the world together ; but this plan does not succeed well. Such professors are not cordially acknowledged by the true Church of God, and even in the world they are not recognized as devoted servants of God. The common opinion respecting them is, that they are as much in love with the world, as any of its most open devotees ; but that for some sinister purpose they have assumed the profession of religion, which sits very awkwardly upon them. But Christ settled this point long ago, when he said. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon ;" "Ye cannot serve two masters ;" and also, when he made it necessary for every disciple to deny himself, and take up his cross. There is, therefore, no such thing as carrying the world in our hearts, if we are the true servants of God. Christians always commence a religious life by a solemn promise to renounce the world, and all its pomps and vanities.

Having represented as fairly as I could, all the advantages to be enjoyed by choosing this world as our portion, let us now turn the tables, and see what can be said in favour of the service of God, notwithstanding all the sacrifices which the pious are required to make.

And here we might argue from the very nature of the case, that that must be the wisest, the safest and happiest course, which has the approbation of God. It cannot be, that under the government of a just and good God, any other course of life should be attended with more benefits than his service. As he has the power to reward those who obey his will, we may be sure that all such shall, sooner or later, enjoy a rich reward. It is true, that the objects which they seek are not objects of sense, and their rewards are future, yet there is no uncertainty as to the reality of these things. We know that they exist, from the testimony of God himself, who cannot lie. And a true faith obtains a glimpse of the excellence and glory of these spiritual riches. For "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And while the experience of the most successful votaries of the world, in all ages, has testified that it is an unsatisfying portion, yea, "vanity and vexation of spirit," so that the mind is never brought to a happy repose in its enjoyment, the things which belong to the spiritual world are found, as far as any have had experience, to be fully adequate to the desires of an immortal soul. Though in this dark world, the heavenly pilgrim obtains but an occasional glimpse, and a transient taste of spiritual enjoyments, yet by these he is

assured, that the excellence of these objects is so superlatively great, and the happiness which they afford so exquisite, that one day spent in the house and service of God, is preferable to all the tumultuous joys of sense. There is, also, in the service of God a dignity and moral propriety, which produce in the soul that peace of conscience, which they who neglect their duty to God, never can enjoy. The truly pious also possess the approbation of the wise and good; and what is far better, they have the favour of God. "Blessed is that man whose God is the Lord." Better have our Creator for our friend, than to possess the friendship of all creatures. For a while, he subjects his people to various trials; but it is all for their good. "All things work together for good to them who love God, who are the called according to his purpose." Even their heaviest afflictions are not excepted. These help "to work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And, under the pressure of affliction, they experience divine supports and consolations, of which the men of the world in their afflictions know nothing. And in a dying hour—which none can escape—they are often enabled to triumph over this last enemy. Christ, the good Shepherd, meets them and comforts them while passing this gloomy valley; so that the saints often sing with joy and assured hope, even on a dying bed,

"Jesus can make," &c.

"Choose then this day whom ye will serve."

It has been admitted that the pious have their afflictions, yea, that they have sorrows which are peculiar to themselves, and of which the men of the world have no experience; such as arise from persecution for righteousness sake, and from a constant conflict with the evils which are in the world, and from the remaining corruptions of their own nature, as well as from temptations by which they are assaulted by the adversary of their souls. They also experience, often, much solicitude and fear respecting their own spiritual condition and future prospects. But they have, also, their peculiar pleasures arising from a sense of God's favour, from peace of conscience, from communion with God, and from the hope of everlasting life. And while the irreligious are subject to many afflictions, to guard against which they possess no antidote, nor even any real alleviation, the righteous have comforts mingled with their

sorrows. They possess support under the heaviest calamities, and often enjoy sweet consolation in the inner man, while the outer man is sorely pressed by the weight of adversity. And to them the terror of death is removed. They need fear no evil in their last conflict, for death is a conquered enemy. The sting of death is taken away, and the grave can boast of no victory over them; but through Him that loved them and gave himself for them, they are brought off more than conquerors. Often it is the fact, that the real Christian's seasons of deep affliction are the seasons of his richest spiritual consolations; and that on his death-bed he enjoys more true happiness than he ever did at any period of his health and earthly prosperity. The light of heaven dawns upon his soul, and he enjoys, as it were, a foretaste of the felicity of the blessed. A philosopher was once asked by a rich king, whom he thought to be the happiest of mortals? he answered wisely that no man should be pronounced happy before we saw his end. His reference was to external prosperity; but this may emphatically be said in relation to future happiness. No man, however rich, powerful and successful, can be pronounced happy who has not a good hope in respect to the coming world. Was the rich man mentioned in the Gospel happy, because during a short life he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, when we are assured, that as soon as he died, he lifted up his eyes in torment? If irreligion possessed every advantage for happiness in this world, it would be the height of folly to choose that course, if in the world to come unceasing misery is to be the consequence. One hour's suffering in hell, will obliterate all pleasant recollection of the pleasures of the world. "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Some shield themselves from the force of these considerations, by entertaining doubts of the reality of future punishment. But unless they could demonstrate that there was no heaven or hell, their neglect of the means to secure the one and avoid the other, cannot be excused. We do not mean, however, to argue with infidels in this place. We leave such to their own thoughts. What we aim at is, to bring such as acknowledge the truth of religion, to act wisely and consistently by embracing what they cannot but acknowledge to be the greatest good, and the most reasonable course.

It is true, that men of carnal minds and vitiated taste

cannot relish the pursuits and pleasures of true religion ; and it is certain, that without a divine, efficacious influence from above, they never will choose the good part which has been recommended to them. But it is right to expostulate with them as reasonable and accountable beings ; for their inability does not in the least interfere with their freedom. In the choice of the world they are perfectly free ; and when, by divine grace, any of them choose Christ and his service, they also are entirely free ; for grace, though efficacious, or, if you please, irresistible, does not in the least interfere with human freedom. They are made willing in the day of God's power, and the more gracious influence is experienced, the more willing the soul becomes : and where there is a willing mind there must be liberty ; for what greater freedom can be imagined than to do what we will ?

“Choose ye then *this day* whom ye will serve.” There should be neither hesitation nor delay. Tomorrow, or any future day, may be too late. The day of grace is limited : death will put an end to all overtures of mercy. Be ye, therefore, now reconciled unto God—in Christ's stead I beseech you to be reconciled. Your judgment is already convinced that it is your interest to make choice of God for your portion, of Christ for your Saviour, and of heaven for your home. Conscience is not silent on the occasion. You cannot but feel that it is your duty to serve God ; and the authority of conscience should be regarded at every risk. The goodness of God in blessing you with so many good things, and continuing you so long upon earth to enjoy the offers of mercy and the means of grace, should persuade you, from a sense of gratitude, to give your heart to God. Where are many who began life nearly at the same time with you ? They are gone to render their account to God, whether prepared or unprepared. Had you been cut down as a barren tree, as you might have been, years ago, what would your condition have been ? O let the goodness of God, and his long suffering, lead you to repentance ! You are not urged to make an unworthy or unreasonable choice, but one which is most noble, because the object of it is intrinsically most excellent. You are not required to choose that which will destroy your happiness, but that which is the only source of true happiness in the universe. And though

the object be infinite, it is nevertheless suited to your soul, which craves an infinite good, and cannot be satisfied with that which is finite. Once more, then, I call upon you to make a choice which you will never regret. This day choose the Lord to be your God and Saviour. Amen.

THE END.

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THE

PARITY OF THE MINISTRY.

BY

CORNELIUS C. CUYLER, D. D.

Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1843, by ALEXANDER W. MITCHELL, M. D. in the office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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PARITY OF THE MINISTRY.



EPHESIANS iv. 11—16.—And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers. From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

IN this passage of holy writ, the apostle treats, at considerable length, of the Church of God, and compares it to a body, of which Christ is the Head, and his people the members. To this relation to the Lord Jesus Christ they are brought by the operation of his word and Spirit. The Church or body itself is in the first instance considered as in a state of infancy, and so are the members. Placed in the body, however, each in its proper position, they, in virtue of such union, derive from Christ their head, through his divinely appointed agencies, those supplies and influences by which; “according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, it maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” This process is continued, “till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Thus divinely nurtured and trained, they would “be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

Now, with a view of “sanctifying and cleansing this Church which he hath purchased with his own blood, with the washing of water by the word, and presenting it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish,” “He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.” By these appointments he designed to gather a Church and prepare it for heaven; or, in the language of our text,

“for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” We have, in these ascension gifts of Christ, the divine provision for gathering, edifying, governing, and perpetuating a Church on earth. Other officers there are none of divine appointment, excepting the Ruling Elders, who have been given to be helps to the ministry in the government of the Church, and Deacons, to whom the special trust of taking care of the poor has been committed.

The apostles were a body of men selected and appointed by Christ himself to fulfil the whole work of the ministry in the establishment of the Church under the new dispensation. Their original number was twelve. Judas fell from it by transgression. Matthias was afterwards added by lot, and Paul was called to it by Christ himself. In order to be an apostle, it was necessary to have seen Christ after his resurrection, that they might be witnesses of that cardinal fact. Hence they could have no successors in that office.

Evangelists were ordinary ministers of the gospel, without a stated pastoral charge, sent forth to preach the gospel in unevangelized regions, and bring them into gospel order. They answer well to what in modern times are called missionaries. Such, probably, were Timothy and Titus. *The prophets*, we have good reason to suppose, were ordinary ministers of the gospel, but specially endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to expound and apply the word of God, and some to foretel future events, of whom was Agabus, who, on one occasion, foretold a coming dearth, and on another, that bonds and imprisonment awaited Paul at Jerusalem. By *pastors* and *teachers* has generally been understood the ordinary, stated, and permanent ministry of the New Testament, acknowledged by all to be authorized to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments, and by all, except Papists and Prelatists or Episcopalians, to perform all the functions of the sacred ministry, including ordination. This last is specifically denied to them by the whole body of Prelatists, against whose assumption of prelatic supremacy over Presbyters we feel bound to contend earnestly in favour of the parity of the sacred ministry. The particular point to be discussed is this—whether the Scriptures, or the early history of the Church, give any countenance to the idea that Bishops are a superior order of ministers to Presbyters. For this, Prelatists, or high church Episcopalians, contend,

and they assume, that without such an order, to whom they give the sole power of ordination, there is no scriptural ministry, and no valid administration of divine ordinances, and of course no Church. Hence they leave all non-Episcopalians to what they are pleased to call "the uncovenanted mercies of God." They are the Church, without whose pale there is ordinarily no salvation. And this conclusion, from their views of the subject, is the more legitimate, because they commonly hold the identity of baptism and regeneration; and baptism, as they say, can be validly administered by those only who have been episcopally ordained.

The language of high church Episcopalians or Prelatists, on the subject of their being the lineal successors of the apostles, and, therefore, alone possessed of a scriptural and valid ministry capable of administering divine ordinances, is so positive and strong, and their denunciations against all who differ from them with respect to this branch of ecclesiastical polity are so sweeping, as to oblige all who hold to ministerial parity either to stand on their defence, or give up their polity, or the hope of salvation by its use. Even decent self-respect would require the adoption of one of the alternatives. Hear what the late Bishop Ravenscroft, of North Carolina, has said on the subject— "What Presbyterian or other dissenter will risk the purchase of property from a distant owner, by power of attorney, upon the mere assertion of the agent that he is empowered to convey the title? Know you of any who would not require to see the power of attorney, that it was in due form of law, and such as would bind the principal, before he would pay the price, or even become bound for it? And know you not of thousands who bargain for the rich inheritance of the gospel, for themselves and their families, without the slightest security beyond the mere say so of the agent? Alas! how very true are our Saviour's words, 'that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.' Episcopalians present these doctrines to their hearers, in the full persuasion that the Church, the ministry, and the sacraments, are as distinctly and truly appointments of God, in order to the salvation of sinners, as the faith of the gospel; and that only as these are united in the profession of religion, can the hope thereby given to man be worthy of the name of assurance." Says Dr. How, "Wilful opposition to episcopacy is certainly rebellion against God, and must, there-

fore, exclude from his presence." Bishop Hobart says, "Where the gospel is proclaimed, communion with the Church," (and he acknowledged no Church without a bishop apostolically succeeding) "by the participation of its ordinances, at the hands of the duly authorized priesthood, is the indispensable condition of salvation." I could quote volumes of similar and even stronger declarations from both sides of the Atlantic. The pulpit and the press have teemed with them.

Under such circumstances what shall we do? While we cheerfully allow our Episcopal brethren to be a branch of the true Church of Christ, and acknowledge the validity of ordinances as administered by them; while we earnestly desire to live in all brotherly affection with them, and would studiously avoid, as we have sought to do, all controversy with them; still we are deeply and conscientiously persuaded not only that our own is in itself "a more excellent way," better calculated to subserve unity, peace, purity, and edification, but that it is in more strict and perfect conformity with the model left us in the word of God. Hence we cannot, conscientiously, give it up, even if our brethren attempt, on that account, to exclude us from the visible body of Christ, and with it, under ordinary circumstances, the hope of salvation; thankful to our God that he now graciously accords us his communion in the ordinances as we enjoy them, and satisfied that he will not exclude us from his presence in glory, conscientiously professing "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." But to proceed to the matter in hand.

We aver, then, that there is no scriptural ground or divine warrant for the threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons, as held by our prelatical brethren, but that the Lord Jesus has instituted but one permanent order of ministry in his Church, and that these are interchangeably denominated Bishops and Elders, whom he has made equal to each other, and clothed with all the authority and power necessary to perpetuate and edify the Church, which is his body.

The apostles do not come into this category. They were specially called, ordained, and qualified by Christ himself to be his witnesses, specially of his resurrection, establish and organize the Church, and complete the canon of Scripture. When their work was done he called them away, and in this high trust they have left no successors—if

they have, let them produce their apostolical credentials from the Lord, and we will receive them as such, but not till then. Diocesan bishops indeed claim the succession; but it is a somewhat remarkable fact, that they have studiously avoided the name, perhaps fearing that the qualifications would be demanded, which it would not be an easy matter to produce. When some in apostolical days claimed to act by apostolical authority, the very devils exclaimed, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?"

With respect to deacons we say, that while we recognize them as officers divinely appointed in the Church, they have neither lot nor part in the ministry of reconciliation. They were appointed to serve tables, or to collect and distribute the alms of the Church; and, as deacons, had nothing to do with respect to the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the ordinances. Their duties are specifically pointed out in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Nor is there any scriptural propriety or warrant for denominating them an order of the ministry under the New Testament. It is an idle, if not a wicked conceit to do so. The New Testament recognizes no priest but Christ. And it is right that it should be so, for he has offered the last sacrifice which God has appointed or will accept. The duties of the ministry have been materially changed under the New Testament, and the Holy Ghost has seen fit to designate them by more appropriate names than that of priest. The circumstance that Prelatists have called one order of ministers *priests*, contrary to their designation in the New Testament, and found another order in the secular office of deacon, is itself enough to cast a shade of suspicion over their whole system. Where so much efficacy is claimed for mere ministerial action, and that is made dependent upon lineal descent of ordination from the apostles, by the hands of diocesan bishops, men ought to be very certain of being able to produce a warrant from the word of God, of so plain a nature that no man could mistake its meaning, and then to lay his hand on every separate link in the chain of descent. Nothing less ought to satisfy us on a subject of such vast importance. We call their assumption unwarrantable, absurd, and, in the circumstances of the Church and the world for the last eighteen hundred years, impossible,

unless a divinely inspired history can be produced. Among the proofs for the parity of the ministry, I mention,—

1. The parity which Christ established in the apostolical college. Ambition had early crept into that sacred fraternity. The sons of Zebedee sought early to be placed on the Saviour's right hand and left hand, in his kingdom; and he rebuked them for it in the most decisive terms. "But be ye not called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon earth, for one is your father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." There was, therefore, a perfect equality among the apostles of our Lord. He did not place any one of them above the rest. They were all of the same order, and were no more authorized to lord it over each other than over the Lord's heritage. It is scarcely to be credited, therefore, that they would establish a different system in the Church, unless they had been expressly directed to do so by the Lord. And that could scarcely be expected after the pains which Christ took to repress the workings of pride and ambition in the hearts of his immediate disciples. Let it also be remembered that the charge of Christ, to which our attention has been directed, was delivered after the supposed grant of primacy to Peter, and consequently cuts it up, root and branch, and shows the utter absurdity of the construction which has been put upon the words which Christ used upon that occasion.

2. In the New Testament the terms bishop and presbyter, or elder, are interchangeably used to designate the same person and office. A striking proof of this occurs in the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. In the seventeenth verse we find these words—"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church." And in the 28th verse, Paul addresses these same elders in the following words:—"Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The word rendered "overseers" in the 28th verse, is the same in the original with the word commonly rendered "bishop." The

elders of the 17th verse, then, become bishops in the 28th verse. One of two things is certain; either Paul, and Luke who is the historian, and the Holy Ghost, by whose inspiration he wrote, must have used words in a very loose and improper sense, or else the terms bishop and elder, or presbyter, are by divine authority applied to the same office. Again, in that famous passage of Paul's Epistle to Titus, from which high churchmen profess to derive the prelatical character of Titus, we find Paul using the following language—"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince gainsayers." Where is the relevancy or propriety of Paul's describing, in so elaborate and graphic a manner, the character and office of a bishop, if he left him in Crete only to ordain elders in every city, unless elders and bishops are identical? It surely would be an absurdity of which an inspired apostle could never be guilty. If words have any determinate meaning, this passage proves conclusively that Paul used the words to designate the same office. With a single remark to elucidate it, the same truth will appear from the apostle's language to Timothy, 1 Tim. iii. 1—7. The remark is this—"That scriptural bishops, unlike diocesans, are never represented as being set over their brethren in the ministry, but over the Church." We accordingly find, that after the apostle has named the office of a bishop in the first verse, he speaks of him in the fifth verse as having the care of the Church committed to him. Besides, it is perfectly absurd to suppose, that when Paul has made bishop and presbyter identical in writing to Titus, he should use almost the same language in describing his character and office in writing to Timothy, but, without intimating the change, mean an office as widely different as that of a diocesan bishop, and an elder or pastoral bishop. From names let us,—

3. Proceed to things which are much more important, and we shall find the same identity for which we contend. This appears very plainly from the qualifications and duties which the Scriptures predicate of them. I instance again the passages to which I have before referred, viz. Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Tim. iii. 1—7; Tit. i. 5, 9. With respect to qualifications, they must be “blameless” in their lives, ordering their families in an exemplary manner, not self-willed, nor irascible, temperate, not given to strife or covetousness, just, holy in heart and life, hospitable, capable of instructing and governing the Church, and putting gainsayers to silence. In a word, they must have the natural, moral, and intellectual endowments, by the exercise of which they may adorn the holy doctrines which they profess, make full proof of their ministry, and in the best manner edify the body of Christ as workmen that need not be ashamed. The Scriptures are as specific with respect to duties, making no difference between bishops and presbyters or elders, leaving us no room to doubt that they are not only equal but the same. And not only so, but with respect to the vexed question of ordination, which Prelatists contend can never be performed in a valid manner without a diocesan bishop, we assert, and stand ready to prove, that they no where speak of bishops at all in connexion with ordination, unless they be part and parcel of the presbytery; but they do speak explicitly of ordination by “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” You will find the proof in 1 Tim. iv. 14—“Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” What is a presbytery? What the very name imports—“A company or council of elders or presbyters.” Here, then, we have a divine warrant for Presbyterian ordination. And now I will thank any man who will show me one for ordination by a bishop, in the prelatial sense of the word. But does not Paul elsewhere say that Timothy was ordained by the laying on of his (Paul’s) hands? Perhaps he does. Let us, however, examine the case. The passage is found in 2 Tim. i. 6—“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by putting on of my hands.” The apostle here refers either to the same transaction spoken of in 1 Tim. iv. 14, in connexion with the laying on

of the hands of the presbytery," or to some other. If to the same, then Paul, in that transaction, united with the other members of the presbytery as one of them, in the ordination of Timothy, and then the ordination was purely presbyterial. Or he refers to some other; and then Timothy was either twice ordained, of which we meet with no other example in Scripture, or else the imposition of hands by Paul alone has no respect to ordination at all, but was done for the purpose of communicating to him the supernatural gifts of the Holy Ghost, which was commonly done by the laying on of the hands of an apostle. The last is probably the true state of the case. If this supposition be correct, then not only have presbyters the power of ordination, but it is predicated in the Scriptures of no other description of persons, unless it be of the apostles; and it is known that they are sometimes denominated elders or presbyters. In this respect we claim for them, scripturally, a rank above that of bishops. For if ordination be "by the hands of the presbytery," then do they ordain in virtue of their being presbyters, and not bishops; and we have already proved the interchangeable use of the names with respect to the same persons.

4. We have other reasons for this conclusion, some of which we proceed to mention. In the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that a dispute arose in the Church at Antioch, on the subject of circumcision, and it was sent up to Jerusalem to be determined there. A council was convened to adjudicate the matter. Of whom was it composed? Of the "apostles and elders." But where were the bishops? There either were none, or they were found among the denomination of elders or presbyters. If they had been a separate and higher order, they would doubtless have been named. To the Church at Philippi, Paul thus addresses his epistle—"To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." What, in this case, becomes of "the elders or presbyters" who were "commanded to be ordained in every city—the working men of the Church, to whom its oversight was invariably committed? There either were none, or they were the bishops to whom the epistle was addressed, of which there can scarcely be a reasonable doubt.

There were in the Church at Ephesus a number of

bishops, as we learn from the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles,—and so there were in the Church at Philippi. But upon the principles of the prelacy, there could have been but one, for they allow but one to a city or diocese. The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that the bishops of the apostolic churches were not diocesan, but Presbyterian; and to these, it is again and again asserted, was the whole oversight and government of the Church committed; which includes the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the ordinances, the exercise of discipline, and the power of perpetuating itself, or ordination. This is proved by Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus, already quoted. Peter's exhortation to his fellow elders proves the same thing, 1 Peter v. 1—3. "The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight (or episcopal supervision) thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." This is surely as full a power as any may need, to fulfil all the functions of the gospel ministry; but a bitter rebuke to those who would exercise an authority in the Church, which God has not delegated to them.

Such were the bishops, or elders, to whom the apostles committed the care and oversight of the Church, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and were called home by the Master; and these the only successors whom they left behind them, as I will now,

5. Proceed briefly to prove from the earliest and best authorities of the Christian Church; premising that our opponents have no right to ask this at our hands, after we have established the parity of the ministry by the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We utterly protest against being bound by any other authority. Still we believe we can show from the best authenticated remains of the first two centuries, that our views of apostolical practice, and interpretations of God's word, with respect to the subject which we are considering, agree substantially with theirs.

Let it then be observed, that the early fathers used

the terms "bishop" and "presbyter," interchangeably, to designate the same office, and that when, in process of time, one of the presbyters was made stated or permanent chairman, moderator, or president of the council of elders or presbytery, of any particular Church, and called on that account the first presbyter or bishop, and eventually "the bishop," this was not of divine right, or as designating a different office or degree in the ministry, but by courtesy, or for the sake of order. And from this, in process of time, as the Church increased and extended herself, the presiding officer became a more important and influential character, claimed supremacy over his fellow presbyters, as of right, and at last became the diocesan bishop, having brought into subjection to him the pastors or bishops of the smaller churches or parishes in the surrounding country. And from this arose, at last, archbishoprics, patriarchates, and that greatest of all abominations, the popedom; and all as of divine right. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" I proceed to verify the statement which I have made.

The first witness I shall cite is Jerome, who, Bingham says, is able to "give us the sense of the ancients." I quote from a note of his on the first chapter of Titus:

"Presbyters and bishops were formerly equal. And before the devil incited men to make divisions in religion, and one was led to say, I am of Paul; and another, I of Apollos; churches were governed by the common council of the presbyters. But, afterwards, when every one in baptizing rather made proselytes to himself than to Christ, it was every where decreed that one person, elected from the rest of the presbyters of each church, should be placed over the others, that the chief care of the Church devolving upon him, the seeds of division might be taken away. Should any one suppose this opinion, viz.—that bishops and presbyters are the same, and that one is the denomination of age, and the other of office, is not determined by the Scriptures, but is only a private opinion, let him read over again the apostle's words to the Philippians, 'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.' Philippi is one of the cities of Macedonia, and as to those who are now esteemed bishops, not more than one at a time can be in one and the same city. But

because bishops at that time were called the same as presbyters, therefore the apostle speaks of bishops indifferently, as being the same as presbyters. And here it should be carefully observed how the apostle, sending for the elders, in the plural, of the single city of Ephesus only, afterwards calls the same persons bishops, Acts xx. 17, 28. He who receives the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, there finds the care of the Church divided equally among many. ‘Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.’ And Peter, who received his name from the firmness of his faith, says in his epistle, “The presbyters who are among you, I exhort, who am also a presbyter, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, (episcopountes, that is, superintending it,) not by constraint, but willingly.’ These passages we have brought forward to show, that with the ancients, presbyters were the same as bishops. But that the roots of the dissention might be plucked up, a usage gradually took place, that the chief care should devolve upon one. Therefore, as presbyters know, that it is by the custom of the Church that they are to be subject to him who is placed over them; so let the bishops know, that they are above presbyters rather by custom than by divine appointment, and that the Church ought to be ruled in common.” Thus far Jerome.

We now proceed to fortify his statements by those of others. We begin with Clemens Romanus, who flourished near the close of the first century. He never mentions together more orders than two, presbyters and deacons, or bishops and deacons, thus exactly following the New Testament, using the names bishop and presbyter as synonymous, both meaning the same order of men. “Bishops, with St. Clement,” says Lord Barington, “are always the same with elders or presbyters, as any one must see, if they read the epistle.” Ignatius, who flourished in the beginning of the second century, furnishes matter on both sides of the question; but his writings have been so manifestly and greatly corrupted, that it would be labour lost to quote him as a witness on

either side, although he represented the office and power of the presbyter as high as any Presbyterian could wish.

Polycarp, who was cotemporary with Ignatius, in the only epistle of his extant, addresses his epistle as follows:—"Polycarp, and the presbyters that are with him, to the Church of God, which is at Philippi," and exhorts them to be "subject to the presbyters and deacons as unto God and Christ"—evidently because he knew of no higher officer in that Church than that of presbyter.

Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century, denominates the presiding officer of the Christian assembly *proestos*, or president; using, in no case, either of the terms bishop or presbyter. Reeves, the translator of Justin, himself an Episcopalian, in his notes on the passage, allows that the *Proestos* or president of Justin, the *Probati Seniores* of Tertullian, the *Majores natu* of Cyprian, and the *Proestotes Presbuteroi* of Paul in his 1st Epistle to Timothy, were all one and the same, and of course not bishops in the prelatical sense of the word, but presbyters, chosen by their fellows to preside over the body, and of the same order with the others.

Irenæus, who flourished toward the latter part of the second century, mentions both bishops and presbyters, and uses them synonymously. In speaking of some who left the Scriptures, and pretended tradition for their errors, he says—"But when we appeal to the tradition which has been preserved to us by the succession of presbyters in the churches," meaning thereby the Scriptures, "they presume they are wiser not only than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, and that they have found the truth in a purer form." In the next chapter he calls this succession "the succession of the bishops." In the celebrated epistle which he wrote to Victor, bishop of Rome one of the pretended predecessors of the pope, he speaks of Aniclitus, Pius, Hyginus, Telesphorus, and Xystus, presiding as presbyters over the Church of Rome." These presbyters are all put as links into the succession, by Papists and Prelatists, without which their chain is not complete. Again Irenæus says, "Wherefore obedience ought to be rendered to those who are presbyters in the Church, who have, as we have shown, succession from the apostles, and who, with the succession of their episcopacy, have a sure deposit of the truth divinely granted to

them according to the good pleasure of our heavenly Father." I could multiply passages from him of similar import, but time obliges me to refrain.

The writers of the third century can be interpreted consistently with the views which we have maintained, although it is admitted that considerably higher notions on the subject of episcopacy began to be entertained. Still there were strong advocates for ministerial parity. Firmilian, bishop of Cesarea in Cappadocia, a friend and cotemporary of Cyprian, and one of the ablest men of his age, was one of them. A very long letter of his is found in Cyprian's works, in which he says, "All power and grace is in the Church, in which presbyters preside, and have the power of baptizing, confirming, and ordaining." It is scarcely probable that Cyprian would dissent from this opinion, inasmuch as he was his bosom friend and great admirer, and when in exile on account of persecution, wrote to his own presbyters as follows:—"I beseech you, according to your faith and religion, that you perform your own duties, and also those belonging to me, so that nothing may be wanting either as to diligence or discipline." Again—"I rely upon your love and your religion, which I well know, and by these letters I exhort and commit the charge to you, that you, whose presence does not expose you to such perils, would discharge my duty, act in my place, and perform all those things which the administration of the Church requires." These are certainly very ample powers: may we not say plenary? But how they consist with the divine right of diocesan episcopacy is quite another question which will be found to be of not very easy solution. Cyprian, however, is claimed by Prelatists as a very important witness. With how much propriety, I leave you to judge.

A single point more, briefly illustrated, and I will close the discussion. It relates to divine truth as a necessary ingredient in a valid apostolical succession. It seems to have been taken for granted, in modern times, that the succession of which we are speaking is purely of persons, altogether independent of doctrinal truth and personal purity. Hence we find Prelatists fraternizing with the Roman hierarchy, notwithstanding all its corruptions and abominations, while they utterly repudiate the purest churches of the Reformation, and give them over to the uncovenanted mercies of

God, because, forsooth, they are not episcopally organized. Not so the primitive Church in its better days. They allowed no valid claim of apostolical succession by the ministry, where purity of doctrine was not maintained. Hence they cast out the heretical sects which, from time to time, sprang up in the bosom of the Church; such as the Arians, the Pelagians, the Donatists, and many others. Take the following from Tertullian. In speaking of heretics who claim by personal succession from the apostles, he says—"But if the heretics feign or fabricate such a succession, this will not help them. For their doctrine itself, compared with the doctrines of the apostles, will, by its own diversity and contrariety, pronounce against them that it had not, as its authority, either any apostle or apostolical man; for as there is no difference among the apostles in their doctrine, so neither did any apostolical men teach anything contrary to them, except those who divided from the apostles, and preached differently. To this form of trial will appeal be made by those churches henceforward daily established, which, though they have neither any of the apostles nor any apostolical men for their founders, yet all agreeing in the same faith, are, from this consanguinity of doctrine, to be esteemed not less apostolical than the former." Many quotations to the same effect might be made, not only from individual authors, but from large and respectable councils. But time fails me. I only add two Scripture testimonies. Says the apostle John—"If there come any man unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Says Paul—"If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Of so much importance did the apostles hold doctrinal truth to be. If men hold not the essential truth of God, the imposition of an apostle's hands would not make them true ministers of Christ.

I have thus, in the best and briefest manner in my power, endeavoured to lay before you some of the reasons of the faith we hold with respect to the order of the ministry of reconciliation, as established by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose will on the subject we learn from the teachings of his holy book, than which we acknowledge no other authoritative and bind-

ing rule of faith and practice. From that book we have endeavoured to show that the apostles were temporary officers, appointed by the Lord for the authoritative propagation of his gospel, and the gathering, organization, and establishment of his visible Church or kingdom on earth, in its New Testament form: that he fully qualified them for the work by bestowing upon them the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit: that in fulfilling their trust they ordained elders or bishops in every Church, to whom they gave its entire care and oversight: that these names are interchangeably applied to the same persons: that a number of those were placed over the same Church at the same time, which could not have been the case if the government had been Episcopal in the modern sense of the word: that the apostles had no successors of apostolical character: that when they died, they appointed no other officers to take charge of the Church than those to whose care they had previously committed it, who are indifferently called elders and bishops: that deacons are not spiritual officers, to whom the care of souls was committed: that the Scriptures never associate the threefold order of bishops, presbyters or priests, and deacons, together, as orders in the ministry, nor speak of priests at all as ministers under the New Testament. And from this we have come to the conclusion that God has established but one order of ministers in the Church under the New Testament, viz. elders or bishops, and that these are all equal. This, we have also shown, is fully borne out by the history of the Church for more than two hundred years after the commencement of the Christian era, and the change to diocesan episcopacy was gradually brought in, and is a human device.

These are some of our reasons for being Presbyterians, and preferring Presbyterian order and government. The subject, as you know, has been rarely introduced into our pulpits, and has latterly found its way there, more as a matter of necessity in self-defence than of choice. We have borne not only reproach, but wrong; our members have been told that they belonged to no church, had no ministry, no divine ordinances; and our very children have been reproached as being unbaptized heathen. We have been silent, and our very silence has been taken for a confession of guilt. We have given

our answer, the reason of our hope, and the ground of our practice. But we will not, we dare not revile. May God bless those who differ from us, and enable them better to understand the teachings of his word on the subject. And may the members of all our churches, whenever they are questioned on the subject, be able to give an intelligent and scriptural reason for their preference and hope. Amen.

THE END.

14

THE

REFUGE OF LIES.

BY A. ALEXANDER, D. D.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1843, by ALEXANDER W. MITCHELL, M. D. in the office of the Clerk of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

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THE
REFUGE OF LIES.

ALL men have some conviction of sin, which, at times, gives them pain. There are, to most, hours of serious reflection, when conscience will speak, and some refuge is felt to be desirable. If men could divest themselves of conscience, it would soon be done, and they would then sin without remorse or fear : but this is not easily nor soon effected. It requires a long course of obstinate sinning, aided by the blindness which error induces, to get the conscience so seared that it will be past feeling ; when the wretch, abandoned of God, and given up to believe a lie, rushes forward through every species of crime to make sure his own damnation. For those who have reached this desperate state of hardness of heart and blindness of mind, it is not worth while to write, because they are already given up of God and forsaken by the Holy Spirit, who no longer restrains them, nor strives with them. Or, if they are not given up to judicial blindness, they are so filled with dark prejudices against religion, that they cannot be induced to read or hear any thing on the subject. Most sinners, however, have their moments of compunction, and have their refuges for relief, to which they betake themselves when urged by the accusations of conscience.

1. The first attempt is to turn away the thoughts from the disagreeable subject ; and to favour this effort, they run into the company of the gay and thoughtless, and engage in such amusements as have a tendency to exhilarate and fascinate the mind, and to drive away all serious reflection. If this giddy course could be kept up without any interruption, it would be a more effectual refuge from the accusations of conscience than it is found to be ; but after

enjoying a scene of dissipation or debauchery, there is commonly an interval of vacuity, and often of depression ; so that the votary of pleasure experiences very painful feelings, rendered more bitter by a conviction that much sin has been committed, and that the course which he is pursuing must lead to the chambers of despair. The acuteness of these feelings will depend very much on the knowledge of religious truth in the mind. Men who have had early religious instruction, in these circumstances suffer far more than those who, having been brought up in ignorance of the nature and obligation of the law of God, have a very dim perception of the nature of sin, except in some of its most enormous acts. To these their ignorance is their source of ease ; but where there is light in the mind, this covering is destroyed. Men whose understandings have been enlightened by the knowledge of truth, cannot return to a state of ignorance ; they cannot obliterate the ideas of religion which have been inculcated upon their tender minds. They must have some other refuge ; and the one which most readily presents itself is some form of infidelity ; and that form of it is embraced which they happen to meet with in some corrupting book, or from some infidel companion, or which they find it most easy to believe. Young men, who have grown up in ignorance, do not commonly feel much zeal in favour of any infidel scheme ; those who become zealous advocates of errors of this description, are more frequently such as have had religious truth lodged in their minds. Many years since, when infidelity began first to be openly professed by many, there was a classical school, in which a number of young men of adult age were students. Part of these were connected with irreligious families, and knew nothing of religion except what they had heard at home in the way of contempt and ridicule ; but another part were the sons of pious men, who had been diligently instructed in the doctrines and duties of religion, and had been kept under restraint. Some of these having been led by their vicious companions into evil practices, and suffering exquisitely from the lashes of a guilty conscience, found themselves in so much need of a refuge from remorse, that when infidel tracts and books were put into their hands, they seized upon them with eagerness, and swallowed the deleterious potion with evident satisfaction, and ceased not to read and collect arguments in favour of the deistical opinions which they

had embraced, and which they found so necessary to the ease of their consciences; whereas those who had never received any religious education, while they were well pleased with any opinions hostile to the Bible and religion, manifested no special zeal in behalf of these opinions; their minds were already much at ease, through their total ignorance of the law of God and of its awful sanctions. They took no pains to establish themselves in error, but took for granted every thing which militated against the Christian religion.

Even when infidel opinions are not explicitly adopted in theory, there is often a state of mind contracted, which, in a great measure, answers the purpose of an infidel theory; that is, a practical disbelief of the threatenings of God's word, or a vague hope that these will never be executed. Persons in this condition are shielded from conviction when they hear the terrors of the law denounced in preaching; they secretly give a negative to all these awful truths, and they take refuge in the same scepticism when their consciences become clamorous.

To such the scheme of the Universalists furnishes a welcome refuge. They do not wish to reject the Bible, since it comes to us so strongly attested; but while they reject infidelity professedly, they avail themselves of every thing in that system of error which is calculated to relieve and soothe a guilty conscience. Universalism, therefore, in our day, has taken the place of open atheism and theoretical infidelity. Here the sinner finds a scheme, professing to be derived from divine revelation, which promises to all a complete immunity from future punishment. Universalists of the old school taught, that the impenitent sinner would be punished in the future world according to the just demerit of his sins; or, as others supposed, until his obstinacy was subdued, and he became truly penitent. And this punishment, they admitted, would not only be severe, but long-continued, even for ages of ages. There was but little in this scheme to comfort the man who was determined to cleave to his sins; but in the new school of Universalists, all the dread of future punishment is done away. They have made the wonderful discovery, that the Bible teaches that all the punishment of sin, however atrocious and long-continued, is confined to this life. This is the only scheme ever invented, which comes up fully to the wishes and feelings of sinners abandoned to iniquity. According to this, repentance would

be folly, and all religion useless. The impious blasphemer may defy the Almighty, may die cursing his Maker, and breathing out vengeance against his fellow men, but he incurs no penalty. He may depart in the full assurance, that as soon as he enters the eternal world he will be admitted into heaven. How poorly such an one will be qualified to join in the hallelujahs of that holy place, every one can see: yet the impious wretch, who spent his life in deeds of malice and wickedness, will receive as great a reward as the devout, humble, and benevolent Christian, who spent his life in doing good, and perhaps died for the honour of his Lord. But in proportion as this scheme is acceptable to ungodly men, it is difficult to be believed. Some determined sinners would give half they possess in the world to have it demonstrated to them: in illustration of which, the following fact may be mentioned:—When an universalist preacher had finished his sermon, and he and his hearers had resorted to the tavern for refreshment, &c., an old drunkard said to the preacher, “I will give you my horse if you will only satisfy me of the truth of what you have preached to-day.”

When men do not love the truth, they are often, in just judgment, given up “to believe a lie, that they may be damned, who have pleasure in unrighteousness.” We need not be surprised, therefore, to see what monstrous absurdities men, under this dereliction, are capable of believing. Many suppose, that no man in his senses can be an atheist: but it is easier to be an atheist than an universalist of this class. Indeed, the system is more dangerous and destructive than blank atheism; for the atheist can promise nothing to impenitent sinners after death. They believe in no futurity: but the universalist pretends to teach his disciples, and from the Bible, too, that live as he may, and die as he may, it matters not how, even if his hand be reeking with his neighbour’s blood, or what is as bad, with his own blood, shed by a suicidal hand, he shall be ushered into a holy heaven, into the immediate presence of a holy God. O! wonderful credulity of deluded men! Surely this is one of the “refuges of lies,” which God will sweep away as with a hail storm.

2. But there are other false refuges into which those who read this tract may be in greater danger of falling. Many among us seem to live at ease, and to be well satisfied with themselves, because they have lived honest and

moral lives. They are good neighbours, good members of society, kind and affectionate to their own families, and often contribute to the relief of the poor and distressed. Now it cannot be denied that these persons are worthy of praise as citizens, and that their characters are amiable in the respects mentioned; and it is painful to be obliged to say to such, If this be all the refuge which you have in the day of judgment, you will not be able to stand. You look around and see multitudes whose conduct is far from being as correct as yours, and you are led to think, if you are in an unsafe condition, what will become of the world? And when one of this character is called away by death, the opinion is confidently expressed by many, that they have made a happy change, and are relieved from all their sorrows and pains. And for any one to express a doubt of the salvation of such persons, is deemed by most to be the height of uncharitableness. By this means the delusion is kept up, and whatever the preacher may say from the pulpit, this current opinion is received in preference, because it is pleasing to the feelings, and tends to lull the conscience into a profound sleep. If the sentiments of the great body of the people could be ascertained, it would be found that nine out of ten entertain the opinion, that if a person leads a moral life, is sober, just in his dealings, a good neighbour, and an affectionate husband and parent, his chance for heaven is as good, at least, as that of those who make a loud profession of religion, whose moral character, it is insinuated, is not better than that of those of whom a description has just been given. There are but two ways conceivable by which men can reach heaven. The one is by their own works; the other by the free and sovereign grace of God through a Redeemer. The first was the original method of life. It is the only one known to reason, and, therefore, men naturally cling to it, and mere doctrinal instruction does not remove them from this false ground. Ask such a one on a death-bed, "on what is your hope of heaven founded?" and he will say, "I have never injured any one; I have endeavoured to live an honest and upright life, and have often relieved the wants of the poor, and done other deeds of charity." "But have you never sinned against God?" "O yes, we are all sinners, and I hope I am not worse than others." "But do you not know that it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to

do them?" How do you expect to answer for your sins at the judgment?" "O! I trust in the mercy of God. If others can find mercy, I hope that I shall also." Not a word of a Mediator. No thought is entertained of the necessity of an expiatory sacrifice. No such feeling of the burden of sin as renders it necessary to come to the cross for relief. But if you mention Christ as the only foundation of a sinner's hope, they will of course assent to it; but it is evident that they have never yet felt the need of Christ and his justifying righteousness. This refuge of trusting to our own good deeds and moral conduct is the ruin of thousands of souls. If this be a safe way to heaven, then, verily, Christ has died in vain; and all that is said in the Holy Scriptures of regeneration and sanctification, by the efficacious operations of the Spirit of God, may go for nothing. And when such persons come to die, they are not commonly alarmed. They have taken up the notion, that if they can only persuade themselves to be *willing to die*, that is a sign that they are fully prepared. And even if on the near approach to eternity, they should feel some apprehension that all is not right, those fears are soon allayed by the counsel of surrounding friends, who encourage them to believe that there is no danger to persons who have lived as they have done. Alas! that such a soul-destroying delusion should be so common in the midst of gospel preaching. The effort of many, however, when their children or near friends are about to be taken away, is to keep religion entirely out of sight. Not a word is spoken to the dying person respecting preparation; and the access to the bed of the sick, of such as would be likely to mention such subjects, is carefully precluded. If the family has been accustomed to attend any place of worship, from the force of custom the minister may be sent for at the very last moment, when all instruction is out of the question: and then he is cautioned to say nothing which will disturb or alarm. In many cases, however, he is excluded from the sick room, under the pretext that the patient is in such a state as not to be able to converse; and he is obliged to be contented with offering up a short prayer. O the devices and stratagems of the devil to prevent the gospel from reaching the minds of the people! This refuge of lies is among the most dangerous, because the characters of the class now under consideration are so amiable and so respectable in the eyes of

the world ; but unless we renounce Christianity, we cannot believe that mere external morality and decency will ever take any one to heaven. If we seek salvation by our works, they must be perfect. We must love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves, through our whole life, and never fail in one instance : who, then, can be saved by his own morality ? And they who trust to this broken reed know nothing of the love of God by experience. And their external actions, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, are found totally deficient. The whole of the duties which they owe to God have been neglected. And they have been guilty of slighting the offers of his mercy in the gospel, and by their trust in their own good deeds have cast contempt on the Son of God, who came down from heaven, and died on the cross, to save guilty sinners.

3. Some, not contented with mere morality, take refuge in a form of religion. We are warned in Scripture to beware of such as have a form of godliness, but deny its power ; “ who have a name that they live, and yet are dead.” “ Not every one,” says Jesus, “ who saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Out of ten virgins, five were foolish, and took no oil in their vessels, and their lamps went out ; and when the bridegroom came at midnight, they were not ready to go out and meet him ; and when these foolish virgins applied for admittance after the door was shut, they met with an awful repulse. O wretched condition of formalists and false professors ! They who are at ease in Zion should be alarmed, for there is a heavy wo denounced against them. At the approaching day of judgment none will be found in a more déplorable condition. Their disappointment will be terrible. They were confident of being received into heaven. They were esteemed to be Christians by the church. They might have stood high as professors. Yea, some of those who will be found in this miserable company of false professors, are preachers of the gospel and workers of miracles. Our Lord represents them as pleading, in that day, the high privileges which they enjoyed, and the high standing which they held in the church. “ Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.” “ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,

have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." Look well to it, ye professors of religion, that you have not taken up with a mere "refuge of lies." Nothing better merits the name of a "refuge of lies," than a profession of religion where the vital power of godliness has never been experienced: for every profession of this kind is in a sort, "lying unto God." Whoever professes religion professes to love God, to believe in Christ, and to repent of all sin: but the false professor has no true faith in Christ, has never repented of his sins, and has not the love of God in his heart. It is easy to deceive men, easy to deceive the elders of the church, easy to deceive yourselves; but God you cannot deceive. And this your false refuge He will sweep away as with a hail storm. O! reflect, in time, how deplorable, how desperate, will be your condition when the midnight cry shall be heard, "behold the bridegroom cometh." Examine carefully, I beseech you, whether your lamps are burning, or whether they are gone out. Look and see whether your vessels are filled with oil, or are empty. Now, while you are in the way, seek that grace which hitherto you have neglected. Your profession, in that coming day of account, will do you no good; it will only serve to increase your condemnation. You may say, "I have been a member of the church from my birth: I have been baptized by a godly minister, and am descended from a long succession of pious ancestors: I have been admitted regularly to the table of the Lord, and my Christian character has never been called in question." All this, or what was equal to this, the Pharisees could have said. The Jews of our Saviour's time did take up with such a refuge; for John Baptist said to them, "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father, for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." And Christ said, "except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

4. I shall mention but one more "refuge of lies" into which many fly, and in which they feel themselves to be perfectly secure, and that is, "a false experience of religion." These are professors too, and, commonly, flaming professors, but they are not mere formalists. They are

not destitute of *heart religion*; but their feelings and affections, however lively, are not genuine, and they do not bring forth the fruits meet for repentance. The cases of such deceived souls are various, but one of the most common is this. The person has been awakened, and may have experienced pungent conviction for sin. He has been constrained to inquire with earnestness, "what must I do to be saved?" And while under these distressing convictions, and earnestly seeking deliverance, the thought has suddenly been suggested, and perhaps conveyed in Scripture language, "thy sins are forgiven thee," or something of similar import. Taking this to be a message from God, he is immediately filled with unutterable joy, from the persuasion that the curse is removed, and that heaven is sure. This suggestion, however, may have been from the enemy of souls, who endeavours to keep his subjects at ease in sin, but when they fall under conviction, his great aim is to deceive them by false hopes; and as he can make suggestions to the mind, and is accustomed to use the words of Scripture to answer his insidious purposes, there is no reason why he may not have it as one of his most successful devices to produce a false peace; and if he has power to influence at the same time the nervous system, so as to excite exhilaration, this will account for those extatic feelings of joy which many experience when no suggestion is made to the mind. Besides, by the power of sympathy, when there is great religious excitement in a congregation, the nerves being wound up for many days, there is commonly a natural reaction; so that feelings of great agony are apt to be succeeded by a kind of thrilling joy, which very much resembles that which is produced by inhaling the nitrous gas. Persons thus affected, experience a peculiar buoyancy of spirits, which prompts them to jump up; and, as they express it often, they feel as if they could fly. It is under nervous feelings of this kind, produced by strong religious impressions on the feelings and imagination, that whole assemblies sometimes are agitated with a wild, tumultuous joy, which is expressed by clapping the hands, and shouting glory! glory! glory! and other similar expressions. Now this enthusiastic feeling is contagious. Persons, not before serious, are often drawn into the vortex; and experiencing an unusual excitement and exhilaration, their reason loses its dominion, and their modesty and reserve being overcome, they join in the common expressions of transport: and this sudden excitement, by many who pro-

fess to be teachers of others, is pronounced to be conversion. Scenes of this kind are not confined to one denomination, but are frequently witnessed at camp-meetings, and other protracted meetings where religious exercises are kept up for many days and nights. And it is not uncommon for persons thus affected to swoon away, or to be agitated with spasmodic motions of the nerves; and in this excited state it is not wonderful that their imaginations should be taken for realities. It is, therefore, not wonderful, that ignorant persons of lively fancy think that they hear words audibly spoken to them, and see a glorious light, or more commonly have a kind of vision of a dignified and beautiful person, whom they take to be the Saviour, and who they fondly imagine smiles upon them. It is enough to extort tears from the most phlegmatic, to think how many precious souls are led into this false refuge; and it is lamentable to observe how the ignorant populace are misled by teachers who persuade them that this is vital religion, and that all who make any objections, are cold-hearted formalists, and enemies of true religion.

THE END.

THE
SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE:

OR,

A BRIEF SUM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE,

CONTAINED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND HELD FORTH
IN THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH;

TOGETHER WITH THE

PRACTICAL USE THEREOF.

All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me; and him that
cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.—JOHN vi. 37.

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THE

SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE, &c.

The Sum of Saving Knowledge may be taken up in these four heads; I. The woful condition wherein all men are by nature, through breaking of the covenant of works. II. The remedy provided for the elect in Jesus Christ by the covenant of grace. III. The means appointed to make them partakers of this covenant. IV. The blessings which are effectually conveyed unto the elect by these means. Which four heads are set down each of them in some few propositions.

HEAD I.

Our woful condition by nature, through breaking the Covenant of Works. Hos. xiii. 9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

I. THE Almighty and Eternal God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in the one and the same undivided Godhead, equally infinite in all perfections, did, before time, most wisely decree, for his own glory, whatsoever cometh to pass in time; and doth most holily and infallibly execute all his decrees, without being partaker of the sin of any creature.

II. This God in six days made all things of nothing, very good in their own kind: in special, he made all the angels holy; and he made our first parents Adam and Eve, the root of mankind, both upright and able to keep the law written in their heart. Which law they were naturally bound to obey under pain of death; but God was not bound to reward their service, till he entered into a Covenant or contract with them, and their posterity in them, to give them eternal life upon condition of perfect personal obedience; withal threatening death in case they should fail. This is the Covenant of Works.

III. Both angels and men were subject to the change of their own free-will, as experience proved; God having reserved to himself the incommunicable property of being naturally unchangeable: for many angels of their own accord fell by sin from their first estate, and became devils. Our first parents, being enticed by Satan, one of these devils speaking in a serpent, did break the covenant of works, in eating the forbidden fruit; whereby they, and their posterity being in their loins, as branches in the root, and comprehended in the same Covenant with them, became not only liable to eternal death, but also lost all ability to please God; yea, did become by nature enemies to God, and to all spiritual good, and inclined only to evil continually. This is our original sin, the bitter root of all our actual transgressions, in thought, word and deed.



HEAD II.

The Remedy provided in Jesus Christ for the Elect by the Covenant of Grace. Hos. xii. 9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help."

I. **ALBEIT** man, having brought himself into this woful condition, be neither able to help himself, nor willing to be helped by God out of it, but rather inclined to lie still insensible of it, till he perish; yet God for the glory of his rich grace, hath revealed in his word a way to save sinners, to wit, by faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, by virtue of, and according to, the tenor of the covenant of grace, made and agreed upon, between God the Father, and God the Son, in the council of the Trinity, before the world began.

II. The sum of the covenant of grace is this; God having freely chosen unto life, a certain number of lost mankind, for the glory of his rich grace, did give them, before the world began, unto God the Son, appointed Redeemer, that, upon condition he would humble himself so far as to assume the human nature of a soul and a body, unto personal union with his divine nature, and submit himself to the law, as surety for them, and satisfy justice for them, by giving obedience in their name, even unto the suffering of the cursed death of the cross, he should ran-

som and redeem them all from sin and death, and purchase unto them righteousness and eternal life, with all saving graces leading thereunto, to be effectually, by means of his own appointment, applied in due time to every one of them. This condition the Son of God (who is Jesus Christ our Lord) did accept before the world began, and in the fulness of time came into the world, was born of the virgin Mary, subjected himself to the law, and completely paid the ransom on the cross: but by virtue of the foresaid bargain, made before the world began, he is in all ages, since the fall of Adam, still upon the work of applying actually the purchased benefits unto the elect: and that he doth by the power of his Holy Spirit, who worketh faith in them, whereby they are united to Christ, and have a right and interest in himself, and in all his blessings.

III. For the accomplishment of this covenant of grace, and making the elect partakers of the benefits thereof Christ Jesus was clad with the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king: made a prophet, to reveal all saving knowledge to his people, and to persuade them to believe and obey the same; made a priest, to offer up himself a sacrifice once for them all, and to intercede continually with the Father, for making their persons and services acceptable to him; and made a king, to subdue them to himself, to feed and rule them by his own appointed ordinances, and to defend them from their enemies.

HEAD III.

The outward means, appointed to make the elect partakers of this covenant, and all the rest that are called to be inexcusable. Matt. xxii. 14. "Many are called."

I. THE outward means and ordinances for making men partakers of the covenant of grace, are so wisely dispensed, as the elect shall be infallibly converted and saved by them; and the reprobate, among whom they are, not be justly stumbled. The means are especially these four; 1. The Word of God. 2. The Sacraments. 3. Church Government. 4. Prayer. In the word of God preached by sent messengers, the Lord makes a gracious offer of Jesus Christ, and his salvation to all sinners; and who-

soever do confess their sin, accept of Christ offered, and submit themselves to his ordinances, he will have both them and their children received into the honour and privileges of the covenant of grace. By the Sacraments, God will have the covenant sealed for confirming the interest of believers therein. By Church Government, he will have them hedged in, and helped forward in the ways of holiness. And by Prayer, he will have his own glorious grace, promised in the covenant, to be daily drawn forth, acknowledged, and employed. All which means are followed either really, or in profession only, according to the quality of the persons, as they are true or counterfeit believers.

II. The covenant of grace, set down in the Old Testament before Christ came, and in the new since he came, is one and the same in substance, albeit different in outward administration: for the covenant in the Old Testament, being sealed with the sacraments of circumcision and the paschal lamb, did set forth Christ's death to come, and the benefits purchased thereby, under the shadow of bloody sacrifices, and sundry ceremonies; but, since Christ came, the covenant being sealed by the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, doth clearly hold forth Christ already crucified before our eyes, victorious over death and the grave, and gloriously ruling heaven and earth, for the good of his own people.



HEAD IV.

The Blessings which are effectually conveyed by these means to the Lord's elect, or chosen ones. Matt. xxii. 14. "Many are called but few are chosen."

I. BY these outward ordinances, as our Lord makes the reprobate inexcusable, so, in the power of his Spirit, he applies unto the elect, effectually, all saving graces purchased to them in the covenant of grace, and maketh a change in their persons. In particular, 1. He doth *convert* or *regenerate* them, by giving spiritual life to them, in opening their understandings, renewing their wills, affections, and faculties, for giving spiritual obedience to his commands. 2. He gives them *saving faith*, by making them, in the sense of

deserved condemnation, to give their consent heartily to the covenant of grace, and to embrace Jesus Christ unfeignedly. 3. He gives them *repentance*, by making them, with godly sorrow, in the hatred of sin, and love of righteousness, turn from all iniquity to the service of God. And, 4. He *sanctifies* them, by making them go on and persevere in faith, and spiritual obedience to the law of God, manifested by fruitfulness in all duties, and doing good works, as God offereth occasion.

II. Together with this inward change of their persons, God changes also their state. For, so soon as they are brought by faith into the covenant of grace, 1. He *justifies* them, by imputing unto them that perfect obedience which Christ gave to the law, and the satisfaction also which upon the cross Christ gave unto justice in their name. 2. He *reconciles* them, and makes them friends to God, who were before enemies to God. 3. He *adopts* them, that they shall be no more children of Satan, but children of God, enriched with all the spiritual privileges of his sons. And last of all, after their warfare in this life is ended, he perfects the holiness, and blessedness, first of their souls at their death, and then both of their souls and their bodies, being joyfully joined together again in the resurrection, at the day of his glorious coming to judgment, when all the wicked shall be sent away to hell, with Satan whom they have served: but Christ's own chosen and redeemed ones, true believers, students of holiness, shall remain with himself for ever, in the state of *glorification*.



USE OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE.

The practical use of saving knowledge, contained in Scripture, and held forth briefly in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

THE chief general use of Christian Doctrine is, to convince a man of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, John xvi. 8; partly by the law or covenant of works, that he may be humbled and become penitent; and partly by the gospel, that he may become an unfeigned believer in Jesus Christ, and be strengthened in his faith upon solid grounds and warrants, and give evidence of the truth of his faith by good fruits, and so be saved.

The sum of the covenant of works, or of the law, is this, If thou do all that is commanded, and not fail in any point, thou shalt be saved: but if thou fail, thou shalt die, Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 10, 12.

The sum of the gospel is this, If thou flee from deserved wrath to the true redeemer Jesus Christ, (who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him) thou shalt not perish, but have eternal life, Rom. x. 8, 9, 11.

For convincing a man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment by the law, or covenant of works, let these Scriptures among many more be made use of.

I. For convincing a man of sin by the law, consider Jer. xvii. 9, 10. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Here the Lord teacheth these two things;

1. That the fountain of all our miscarriage, and actual sinning against God, is in the heart, which comprehendeth the mind, will, affections, and all the powers of the soul, as they are corrupted and defiled with original sin; the mind being not only ignorant and incapable of saving truth, but also full of error and enmity against God; and the will and affections being obstinately disobedient unto all God's directions, and bent toward that only which is evil: The heart (saith he) is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; yea, and unsearchably wicked, so that no man can know it; and Gen. vi. 5. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually, saith the Lord, whose testimony we must trust in this and all other matters; and experience also may teach us, that till God makes us deny ourselves, we never look to God in any thing, but fleshly self-interest alone doth rule us, and move all the wheels of our actions.

2. That the Lord bringeth our original sin, or wicked inclination, with all the actual fruits thereof, unto reckoning before his judgment-seat; for he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Hence let every man reason thus;

“What God and my guilty conscience bear witness of, I am convinced that it is true.

“ But God and my guilty conscience bear witness, that my heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; and that all the imaginations of my heart, by nature, are only evil continually.

“ Therefore, I am convinced that this is true.”

Thus a man may be convinced of sin by the law.

II. For convincing a man of righteousness by the law, consider Gal. iii. 10. “ As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse : for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

Here the apostle teacheth us three things :

1. That, by reason of our natural sinfulness, the impossibility of any man’s being justified by the works of the law, is so certain, that whosoever do seek justification by the works of the law, are liable to the curse of God for breaking of the law ; “ For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse,” saith he.

2. That unto the perfect fulfilling of the law, the keeping of one or two of the precepts, or doing of some, or of all duties (if it were possible) for a time, is not sufficient ; for the law requireth, that “ a man continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

3. That, because no man can come up to this perfection, every man by nature is under the curse ; for the law saith, “ cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

Now, to be under the curse, comprehendeth all the displeasure of God, with the danger of the breaking forth more and more of his wrath upon soul and body, both in this life, and after death perpetually, if grace do not prevent the full execution thereof.

Hence let every man reason thus :

“ Whosoever, according to the covenant of works, is liable to the curse of God, for breaking the law, times and ways out of number, cannot be justified, or find righteousness by the work of the law.

“ But I, (may every man say) according to the covenant of works, am liable to the curse of God, for breaking the law, times and ways out of number.

“ Therefore, I cannot be justified, or have righteousness, by the works of the law.”

Thus may a man be convinced of righteousness, that it is not to be had by his own works, or by the law.

III. For convincing a man of judgment by the law, consider 2 Thess. i. 7. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels: verse 8. In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: verse 9. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; verse 10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Wherein we are taught, that our Lord Jesus, who now offers to be mediator for them who believe in him, shall, at the last day, come armed with flaming fire, to judge, condemn, and destroy all them who have not believed God, have not received the offer of grace made in the gospel, nor obeyed the doctrine thereof; but remain in their natural state, under the law or covenant of works.

Hence let every man reason thus:

"What the righteous Judge hath forewarned me, shall be done at the last day, I am sure is just judgment.

"But the righteous Judge hath forewarned me, that if I do not believe God in time, and obey not the doctrine of the gospel, I shall be secluded from his presence and his glory, at the last day, and be tormented in soul and body for ever.

"Therefore I, am convinced that this is a just judgment.

"And I have reason to thank God heartily, who hath forewarned me to flee from the wrath which is to come."

Thus every man may be, by the law or covenant of works, convinced of judgment, if he shall continue under the covenant of works, or shall not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

IV. For convincing a man of sin, righteousness, and judgment by the gospel.

As for convincing a man of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, by the gospel, he must understand three things: 1. That not believing in Jesus Christ, or refusing of the covenant of grace offered in him, is a greater and more dangerous sin, than all other sins against the law; because the hearers of the gospel, not believing in Christ,

do reject God's mercy in Christ, the only way of freedom from sin and wrath, and will not yield to be reconciled to God. 2. Next, he must understand, that perfect remission of sin, and true righteousness, is to be had only by faith in Jesus; because God requireth no other conditions but faith; and testifies from heaven, that he is well pleased to justify sinners upon this condition. 3. He must understand, that upon righteousness received by faith, judgment shall follow, on the one hand, to the destroying of the works of the devil in the believer, and to the perfecting of the work of sanctification in him, with power: and that, upon refusing to take righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, judgment shall follow, on the other hand, to the condemnation of the unbeliever, and destroying of him with Satan and his servants for ever.

For this end, let these passages of Scripture, among many others, serve to make the greatness of the sin of not believing in Christ appear; or, to make the greatness of the sin of refusing of the covenant of grace offered to us, in the offering of Christ unto us, let the fair offer of grace be looked upon as it is made, Isaiah lv. 3. "Incline your ear, and come unto me, (saith the Lord) hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." That is, If ye believe me, and be reconciled to me, I will, by covenant, give unto you Christ, and all saving graces in him: repeated, Acts xiii. 34.

Again, consider, that this general offer, in substance, is equivalent to a special offer made to every one in particular; as appeareth by the apostle's making use of it, Acts xvi. 31. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The reason of which offer is given, John iii. 16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Seeing then this great salvation is offered in the Lord Jesus, whosoever believeth not in him, but looks for happiness some other way, what doth he else but observe lying vanities, and forsake his own mercy, which he might have had in Christ? Jonah ii. 8, 9. What doth he else but blaspheme God in his heart? as it is said, 1 John v. 10, 11. "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believ-

eth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son." And that no sin against the law is like unto this sin, Christ testifies, John xv. 22. "If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." This may convince a man of the greatness of this sin of not believing in Christ.

For convincing a man of righteousness to be had only by faith in Jesus Christ, consider how, Rom. x. 3, 4, it is said, that the Jews, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God (and so they perished) for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And, Acts xiii. 39. "By Christ Jesus all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." And, 1 John i. 7. "And the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

For convincing a man of judgment, if a man embrace this righteousness: consider, 1 John iii. 8. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." And Heb. ix. 14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"

But if a man embrace not this righteousness, his doom is pronounced, John iii. 18. 19. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

Hence let the penitent, desiring to believe, reason thus:

"What doth suffice to convince all the elect in the world of the greatness of the sin of not believing in Christ, or refusing to flee to him for relief from sins done against the law, and from wrath due thereto; and what sufficeth to convince them, that righteousness and eternal life is to be had by faith in Jesus Christ, or by consenting to the covenant of grace in him; and what sufficeth to convince them of judgment to be exercised by Christ, for destroying the works of the devil in a man, and sanctifying and sav-

ing all that believe in him, may suffice to convince me also.

“But what the Spirit hath said, in these or other like scriptures, sufficeth to convince the elect world of the fore-said sin, and righteousness and judgment.

“Therefore what the Spirit hath said, in these and other like scriptures, serveth to convince me thereof also.”

Whereupon let the penitent, desiring to believe, take with him words, and say heartily to the Lord, Seeing thou sayest, Seek ye my face, my soul answereth unto thee, Thy face, Lord will I seek: I have hearkened unto the offer of an everlasting covenant of all saving mercies to be had in Christ, and I do heartily embrace thy offer. Lord, let it be a bargain; Lord, I believe, help my unbelief: behold, I give myself to thee, to serve thee in all things for ever; and I hope, thy right hand shall save me; the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me; thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever; forsake not the works of thine own hands.

Thus may a man be made an unfeigned believer in Christ.

For strengthening the man's faith, who hath agreed unto the covenant of grace.

Because many true believers are weak, and do much doubt if ever they shall be sure of the soundness of their own faith and effectual calling, or made certain of their justification and salvation, when they see, that many, who profess faith, are found to deceive themselves; let us see how every believer may be made strong in the faith, and sure of his own election and salvation upon solid grounds, by sure warrants, and true evidences of faith. To this end, among many other scriptures, take these following.

1. For laying solid grounds of faith, consider 2 Peter i. 10. “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

In which words, the apostle teacheth us these four things, for help and direction, how to be made strong in the faith;

1. That such as believe in Christ Jesus, and are fled to him for relief from sin and wrath, albeit they be weak in the faith, yet they are indeed children of the same Father with the apostles; for so he accounteth of them, while he calleth them brethren.

2. That, albeit we be not sure, for the time, of our effectual calling and election, yet we may be made sure of both, if we use diligence; for this he presupposeth, saying, “give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”

3. That we must not be discouraged, when we see many seeming believers prove rotten branches, and make defection; but we must the rather take the better heed to ourselves: “wherefore the rather, brethren, saith he, give all diligence.”

4. That the way to be sure both of our effectual calling and election, is to make sure work of our faith, by laying the grounds of it solidly, and bringing forth the fruits of our faith in new obedience constantly: “for if ye do these things, saith he, ye shall never fall;” understanding, by these things, what he had said of sound faith, verses 1—4, and what he had said of the bringing out of the fruits of faith,” verses 5—9.

To this same purpose, consider Rom. viii. 1. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” Verse 2. “For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Verse 3. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;” Verse 4. “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.”

Wherein the apostle teacheth us these four things, for laying of the ground of faith solidly:

1. That every one is a true believer, who, in the sense of his sin, and fear of God’s wrath, doth flee for full relief from both unto Jesus Christ alone, as the only mediator, and all-sufficient redeemer of men; and being fled to Christ, doth strive against his own flesh, or corrupt inclination of nature, and studieth to follow the rule of God’s Spirit, set down in his word: For the man, whom the apostle doth here bless as a true believer, is a man in Christ Jesus, who doth not “walk after the flesh, but after the spirit.”

2. That all such persons as are fled to Christ, and do strive against sin, howsoever they may be possibly exercised under the sense of wrath and fear of condemnation, yet they are in no danger; for, “there is no condemnation,”

(saith he) "to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

3. That, albeit the apostle himself (brought in here for example's cause), and all other true believers in Christ, be by nature under the law of sin and death, or under the covenant of works (called the law of sin and death, because it bindeth sin and death upon us, till Christ set us free;) yet the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, or the covenant of grace (so called, because it doth enable and quicken a man to a spiritual life through Christ,) doth set the Apostle, and all true believers, free from the covenant of works, or the law of sin and death; so that every man may say with him, "The law of the Spirit of life," or the covenant of grace, "hath made me free from the law of sin and death," or covenant of works.

4. That the fountain and first ground, from whence our freedom from the curse of the law doth flow, is the covenant of grace, past betwixt God, and God the Son, as incarnate, wherein Christ takes the curse of the law upon him for sin, that the believer, who could not otherwise be delivered from the covenant of works, may be delivered from it. And this doctrine the Apostle holdeth forth in these four branches: (1.) That it was utterly impossible for the law, or the covenant of works, to bring righteousness and life to a sinner, because it was weak. (2.) That this weakness and inability of the law, or covenant of works, is not the fault of the law, but the fault of the sinful flesh, which is neither able to pay the penalty of sin, nor to give perfect obedience to the law (presuppose by-gone sins were forgiven:) "The law was weak," saith he, "through the flesh." (3.) That the righteousness and salvation of sinners, which was impossible to be brought about by the law, is brought to pass by sending God's own Son, Jesus Christ, in the flesh, in whose flesh sin is condemned and punished, for making satisfaction in behalf of the elect, that they might be set free. (4.) That, by his means, the law loseth nothing, because the righteousness of the law is best fulfilled this way; first, by Christ's giving perfect active obedience in our name unto it in all things: next, by his paying in our name the penalty (due to our sins) in his death: And, lastly, by his working of sanctification in us, who are true believers, who strive to

give new obedience unto the law, and “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE.

FOR building our confidence upon this solid ground, these four warrants and special motives to believe in Christ may serve.

The first whereof is God’s hearty invitation, held forth in Isaiah lv. 1—5. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Ver. 2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Ver. 3. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Ver. 4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people,” &c.

Here (after setting down the precious ransom of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ, and the rich blessings purchased to us thereby, in the two former chapters) the Lord, in this chapter,

1. Maketh open offer of Christ and his grace, by proclamation of a free and gracious market of righteousness and salvation, to be had through Christ to every soul, without exception, that truly desires to be saved from sin and wrath: “Ho, every one that thirsteth,” saith he.

2. He inviteth all sinners, that for any reason stand at distance with God, to come and take from him riches of grace, running in Christ as a river, to wash away sin, and to slocken (quench) wrath: “Come, ye to the waters,” saith he.

3. Lest any should stand aback, in the sense of his own sinfulness or unworthiness, and inability to do any good, the Lord calleth upon such persons in special, saying, “He that hath no money, come.”

4. He craveth no more of his merchant, but that he be pleased with the wares offered, which are grace, and more grace; and that he heartily consent unto, and embrace

this offer of grace, that so he may be brought under the bond of the covenant: "Come, buy without money," saith he, "come, eat:" That is, consent to have, and take unto you all saving graces; make the wares your own, possess them, and make use of all blessings in Christ; whatsoever maketh for your spiritual life and comfort, use and enjoy it freely, without paying any thing for it: "Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price," saith he.

5. Because the Lord knoweth how much we are inclined to seek righteousness and life by our own performances and satisfaction, to have righteousness and life as it were by the way of works; and how loth we are to embrace Christ Jesus, and to take life by way of free grace through Jesus Christ; therefore the Lord lovingly calls us off this our crooked and unhappy way, with a gentle and timely admonition, giving us to understand, that we shall but lose our labour in this our way: "Wherefore do ye spend your money (saith he) for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

6. The Lord promiseth to us solid satisfaction, in the way of betaking ourselves unto the grace of Christ, even true contentment, and fulness of spiritual pleasure, saying, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

7. Because faith cometh by hearing, he calleth for audience unto the explication of the offer, and calleth for believing of, and listening unto the truth, which is able to beget the application of saving faith, and to draw the soul to trust in God: "Incline your ear, and come unto me," saith he. To which end, the Lord promises, that in receiving this offer, the dead sinner shall be quickened and translated into a covenant-state of perpetual reconciliation and peace: "Hearken and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." Which covenant, he declareth, shall be in substance the assignation, and the making over, of all the saving graces which David (who is Jesus Christ, Acts xiii. 34.) hath bought for us in the covenant of grace: "I will make a covenant with you," saith he, "even the sure mercies of David." By sure mercies, he means saving graces, such as are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, adoption, sanctifi-

cation, and glorification, and whatsoever belongs to godliness and life eternal.

8. To confirm and assure us of the real grant of these saving mercies, and to persuade us of the reality of the covenant-relation betwixt God and the believer of this word, the Father hath made a fourfold gift of his eternal and only begotten Son :

First, To be incarnate and born for our sake, of the seed of David his type ; for which cause he is called here, and Acts xiii. 34, "David," the true and everlasting king of Israel. This is the great gift of God to man. John iv. 10. And here, "I have given him to be David," or born of David, "to the people."

Secondly, He hath made a gift of Christ to be a witness to the people, both of the sure and saving mercies granted to the redeemed in the covenant of grace ; and also of the Father's willingness and purpose to apply them, and to make them sure to such as embrace the offer : "I have given him" (saith the Lord here) "to be a witness to the people." And truly he is a sufficient witness in this matter, in many respects : 1st, Because he is one of the blessed Trinity, and party-contractor for us, in the covenant of grace, before the world was. 2dly, He is by office, as Mediator, the messenger of the covenant, and hath gotten commision to reveal it. 3dly, He began actually to reveal it in Paradise, where he promised, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. 4thly, He set forth his own death and sufferings, and the great benefits that should come thereby to us, in the types and figures of sacrifices and ceremonies before his coming. 5thly, He gave more and more light about this covenant, speaking by his Spirit, from age to age, in the holy prophets. 6thly, He came himself, in the fulness of time, and did bear witness of all things belonging to this covenant, and of God's willing mind to take believers into it ; partly by uniting our nature in one person with the divine nature ; partly by preaching the good tidings of the covenant with his own mouth ; partly by paying the price of redemption on the cross ; and partly by dealing still with the people, from the beginning to this day, to draw in, and to hold in the redeemed in this covenant.

Thirdly, God hath made a gift of Christ, as a leader to

the people, to bring us through all difficulties, all afflictions and temptations, unto life, by this covenant: And he it is, and no other, who doth, indeed, lead his own unto the covenant; and, in the covenant, all the way on unto salvation: 1. By the direction of his word and Spirit. 2. By the example of his own life, in faith and obedience, even to the death of the cross. 3. By his powerful working, bearing his redeemed ones in his arms, and causing them to lean on him, while they go up through the wilderness.

Fourthly, God hath made a gift of Christ unto his people, as a commander: which office he faithfully exerciseth, by giving to his church and people, laws and ordinances, pastors and governors, and all necessary officers; by keeping courts and assemblies among them, to see that his laws be obeyed; subduing, by his word, Spirit, and discipline, his people's corruptions; and, by his wisdom and power, guarding them against all their enemies whatsoever.

Hence, he who hath closed with God's covenant, may strengthen his faith, by reasoning after this manner:

"Whosoever doth heartily receive the offer of free grace, made here to sinners, thirsting for righteousness and salvation; unto him, by an everlasting covenant, belongeth Christ, the true David, with all his sure and saving mercies.

"But I (may the weak believer say) do heartily receive the offer of free grace made here to sinners, thirsting for righteousness and salvation.

"Therefore unto me, by an everlasting covenant, belongeth Christ Jesus, with all his sure and saving mercies."

The second warrant and special motive to embrace Christ, and believe in him, is the earnest request that God maketh to us to be reconciled to him in Christ, held forth 2 Cor. v. 19—21. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Ver. 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Ver. 21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Wherein the Apostle teacheth us these nine doctrines:

First, That the elect world, or world of redeemed souls, are, by nature, in the estate of enmity against God: This is presupposed in the word "reconciliation"; for reconciliation, or renewing of friendship, cannot be, except betwixt those that have been at enmity.

Second, That in all the time by-past, since the fall of Adam, Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, as Mediator, and the Father in him, hath been about the making friendship (by his word and Spirit) betwixt himself and the elect world: "God," saith he, "was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."

Third, That the way of reconciliation was in all ages one and the same in substance, viz: by forgiving the sins of them who do acknowledge their sins and their enmity against God, and do seek reconciliation and remission of sins in Christ: "For God," saith he, "was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," by way of "not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Fourth, That the end and scope of the gospel, and whole word of God is threefold: 1. It serveth to make people sensible of their sins, and of their enmity against God, and of their danger, if they should stand out, and not fear God's displeasure. 2. The word of God serveth to make men acquainted with the course which God hath prepared for making friendship with them through Christ, viz: That if men shall acknowledge the enmity, and shall be content to enter into friendship with God, through Christ, then God will be content to be reconciled with them freely. 3. The word of God serveth to teach men how to carry themselves towards God, as friends, after they are reconciled to him, viz: To be loth to sin against him, and to strive heartily to obey his commandments; and therefore the word of God here is called the word of reconciliation, because it teacheth us what need we have of reconciliation, and how to obtain it, and how to keep the reconciliation or friendship, being made with God through Christ.

Fifth, That albeit the hearing, believing, and obeying of this word, doth belong to all those to whom this gospel doth come; yet the office of preaching of it, with authority, belongeth to none but to such only as God doth call to his ministry, and sendeth out with commission for

this work. This the Apostle holdeth forth, ver. 19, in these words: "He hath committed to us the word of reconciliation."

Sixth, That the ministers of the gospel should behave themselves as Christ's messengers, and should closely follow their commission set down in the word, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; and, when they do so, they should be received by the people as ambassadors from God; for here the Apostle, in all their names, saith, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us."

Seventh, That ministers, in all earnestness of affections, should deal with people to acknowledge their sins, and their natural enmity against God, more and more seriously; and to consent to the covenant of grace and embassage of Christ more and more heartily; and to evidence more and more clearly their reconciliation, by a holy carriage before God. This he holdeth forth, when he saith, "We pray you, be ye reconciled to God."

Eighth, That in the ministers' affectionate dealing with the people, the people should consider that they have to do with God and Christ, requesting them, by the ministers, to be reconciled: Now, there cannot be a greater inducement to break a sinner's hard heart, than God's making a request to him for friendship; for when it became us, who have done so many wrongs to God, to seek friendship of God, he preventeth* us; and (O wonder of wonders!) he requesteth us to be content to be reconciled to him; and therefore most fearful wrath must abide them who do set light by this request, and do not yield when they hear ministers with commission, saying, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Ninth, To make it appear, how it cometh to pass that reconciliation should be so easily effected betwixt God and a humble sinner fleeing to Christ, the Apostle leads us unto the cause of it, held forth in the covenant of grace, the sum whereof is this: "It is agreed betwixt God and the Mediator Jesus Christ, the Son of God, surety for the redeemed, as parties-contractors, that the sins of the redeemed should be imputed to innocent Christ, and he both con-

* "Preventeth," i. e. is before-hand with us.

demned and put to death for them, upon this very condition, that whosoever heartily consent unto the reconciliation offered through Christ, shall, by the imputation of his obedience unto them, be justified and held righteous before God; for God hath made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, saith the Apostle, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Hence may a weak believer strengthen his faith, by reasoning from this ground after this manner:

"He that, upon the loving request of God and Christ, made to him by the mouth of ministers (having commission to that effect,) hath embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and doth purpose, by God's grace, as a reconciled person, to strive against sin, and to serve God to his power constantly, may be as sure to have righteousness and eternal life given to him, for the obedience of Christ imputed to him, as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed imputed to him.

"But I (may the weak believer say,) upon the loving request of God and Christ, made to me by the mouth of his ministers, have embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and do purpose, by God's grace, as a reconciled person, to strive against sin, and to serve God to my power constantly.

Therefore I may be as sure to have righteousness and eternal life given to me, for the obedience of Christ imputed to me, as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed imputed to him."

The third warrant and special motive to believe in Christ, is the strait and awful command of God, charging all the hearers of the gospel to approach to Christ in the order set down by him, and to believe in him: held forth, 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

Wherein the Apostle giveth us to understand these five doctrines:

1. That if any man shall not be taken with the sweet invitation of God, nor with the humble and loving request of God, made to him to be reconciled, he shall find he hath to do with the sovereign authority of the highest Majesty:

for "this is his commandment, that we believe in him," saith he.

2. That if any man look upon this commandment as he hath looked heretofore upon the neglected commandments of the law, he must consider that this is a command of the gospel,* posterior to the law, given for making use of the remedy of all sins; which if it be disobeyed, there is no other command to follow but this, "Go, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire of hell:" for "this (that is, to believe) is his commandment," the obedience of which is most pleasant in his sight, ver 22, and without which it is impossible to please him. Heb. xi. 6.

3. That every one who heareth the gospel, must make conscience of the duty of lively faith in Christ: the weak believer must not think it presumption to do what is commanded; the person inclined to desperation must take up himself, and think upon obedience unto this sweet and saving command: The strong believer must dip yet more in the sense of his need he hath of Jesus Christ, and more and more grow in the obedience of this command: yea, the most impenitent, profane, and wicked person must not thrust out himself, or be thrust out by others, from orderly aiming at this duty, how desperate soever his condition seem to be: for he that commands all men to believe in Christ, doth thereby command all men to believe that they are damned and lost without Christ: he thereby commands all men to acknowledge their sins, and their need of Christ, and in effect commands all men to repent and believe in him. And whosoever do refuse to repent of their bygone sins, are guilty of disobedience to this command, given to all hearers, but especially to those that are within the visible church: for "this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," saith he.

4. That he who obeyeth this commandment, hath built his salvation on a solid ground; for, 1. He hath found the promised Messiah, completely furnished with all perfections unto the perfect execution of the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; for he is that Christ, in whom the

* *i. e.* A command founded on the dispensation of grace revealed in the gospel, and which could not be enjoined by the law as a covenant of works, which knows nothing of a Mediator: otherwise all commands do, in their own nature, belong to the law.

man doth believe. 2. He hath embraced a Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost; yea, and who doth effectually save, every one that cometh to God through him: for he is Jesus the true Saviour of his people from their sins. 3. He that obeyeth this command, hath built his salvation on the rock, that is, on the Son of God, to whom it is no robbery to be called equal to the Father, and who is worthy to be the object of saving faith, and of spiritual worship: for "this is his command," saith he, "that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ."

5. That he who hath believed on Jesus Christ (though he be freed from the curse of the law) is not freed from the command and obedience of the law, but tied thereunto by a new obligation, and a new command from Christ; which new command from Christ importeth help to obey the command: unto which command from Christ, the Father addeth his authority and command also; for this is his commandment," saith John, "that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he hath commanded us." The first part of which command, enjoining belief in him, necessarily implieth love to God, and so obedience to the first table; for believing in God, and loving God, are inseparable: and the second part of the command enjoineth love to our neighbour, (especially to the household of faith,) and so obedience to the second table of the law.

Hence may a weak believer strengthen himself, by reasoning from this ground after this manner:

"Whosoever in the sense of his own sinfulness and fear of God's wrath, at the command of God, is fled to Jesus Christ, the only remedy of sin and misery, and hath engaged his heart to the obedience of the law of love, his faith is not presumptuous or dead, but true and saving faith.

"But I (may the weak believer say,) in the sense of my own sinfulness, and fear of God's wrath, am fled to Jesus Christ, the only remedy of sin and misery, and have engaged my heart to the obedience of the law of love.

"Therefore my faith is not a presumptuous and dead faith, but true and saving faith."

The fourth warrant and special motive to believe in

Christ, is *much assurance of life* given, in case men shall obey the command of believing; and a *fearful certification* of destruction, in case they obey not; held forth, John iii. 35. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. Ver. 36. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Wherein are held forth to us these five following doctrines:

1. That the Father is well satisfied with the undertakings of the Son, entered Redeemer and Surety to pay the ransom of believers, and to perfect them in holiness and salvation: "The Father loveth the Son," saith he; viz: as he standeth Mediator in our name, undertaking to perfect our redemption in all points: The Father loveth him, that is, doth heartily accept his offer to do the work, and is well pleased with him; his soul delighteth in him; and resteth upon him, and maketh him, in this his office, the "receptacle of love, grace, and good will," to be conveyed by him to believers in him.

2. That, for fulfilling of the covenant of grace, the Father hath given to the Son (as he standeth in the capacity of the Mediator, or as he is God incarnate, the Word made flesh) all authority in heaven and earth, all furniture of the riches of grace, and of spirit and life, with all power and ability, which the union of the divine nature with the human, or which the fulness of the Godhead dwelling substantially in his human nature, or which the indivisible all-sufficiency and omnipotency of the inseparable, every where present Trinity doth import, or the work of redemption can require: "The Father (saith he) hath given all things into the Son's hand," to wit, for accomplishing his work.

3. Great assurance of life is held forth to all who shall heartily receive Christ, and the offer of grace and reconciliation through him: "He that believeth on the Son," saith he, "hath everlasting life;" for it is made fast unto him, 1. In God's purpose and irrevocable decree, as the believer is a man elected to life. 2. By effectual calling of him unto life by God, who, as he is faithful, so will he do it. 3. By promise and everlasting covenant, sworn by God, to give the believer strong consolation in life and

death, upon immutable grounds. 4. By a pawn and infestment* under the great seal of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, so oft as the believer shall come to receive the symbols and pledges of life. 5. In Christ the fountain and head of life, who is entered in possession, as attorney for believers; in whom our life is so laid up, that it cannot be taken away. 6. By begun possession of spiritual life in regeneration, and a kingdom consisting in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, erected within the believer, as earnest of the full possession of everlasting life.

4. A fearful certification is given, if a man receive not the doctrine concerning righteousness and eternal life to be had by Jesus Christ: "He that believes not the Son, shall not see life;" that is, not so much as understand what it meaneth.

5. He further certifieth, that if a man receive not the doctrine of the Son of God, he shall be burdened twice with the wrath of God; once as a born rebel by nature, he shall bear the curse of the law, or the covenant of works; and next he shall endure a greater condemnation, in respect that light being come into the world, and offered to him, he hath rejected it, and loveth darkness rather than light: And this double wrath shall be fastened and fixed immovably upon him, so long as he remaineth in the condition of unbelief: "The wrath of God abideth on him," saith he.

Hence may the weak believer strengthen his faith, by reasoning from this ground after this manner:

"Whosoever believeth the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and finds himself partly drawn powerfully to believe in him, by the sight of life in him, and partly driven by the fear of God's wrath, to adhere unto him, may be sure of right and interest to life eternal through him.

"But sinful and unworthy I (may the weak believer say) do believe the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and do feel myself partly drawn powerfully to believe in him, by the sight of life in him, and partly driven, by the fear of God's wrath, to adhere unto him.

"Therefore I may be sure of my right and interest unto eternal life through him."

* A term borrowed from the Scots law, signifying the solemnity of the delivery of an heritable subject to the proprietor.

THE EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH.

So much for the laying the grounds of faith, and warrants to believe. Now, for evidencing of true faith by fruits, these four things are requisite: 1. That the believer be soundly convinced in his judgment, of his obligation to keep the whole moral law, all the days of his life; and that not the less, but so much the more, as he is delivered by Christ from the covenant of works, and curse of the law. 2. That he endeavour to grow in the exercise and daily practice of godliness and righteousness. 3. That the course of his new obedience run in the right channel, that is, through faith in Christ, and through a good conscience, to all the duties of love towards God and man. 4. That he keep strait communion with the fountain Christ Jesus, from whom grace must run along for furnishing of good fruits.

For the first, viz: To convince the believer, in his judgment, of his obligation to keep the moral law, among many passages, take Mat. v. 16. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Ver. 17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Ver. 18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Ver. 19. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: But whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Ver. 20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Wherein our Lord,

1. Giveth commandment to believers, justified by faith, to give evidence of the grace of God in them, before men, by doing good works: "Let your light so shine before men," saith he, "that they may see your good works."

2. He induceth them so to do, by showing, that albeit they be not justified by works, yet spectators of their good

works may be converted or edified ; and so glory may redound to God by their good works, when the witnesses thereof “ shall glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

3. He gives them no other rule for their new obedience than the moral law, set down and explicated by Moses and the prophets ; “ Think not (saith he) that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets.”

4. He gives them to understand, that the doctrine of grace and freedom from the curse of the law, by faith in him, is readily mistaken by men’s corrupt judgments, as if it did loose or slacken the obligation of believers to obey the commands, and to be subject to the authority of the law ; and that this error is indeed a destroying of the law and of the prophets, which he will in no case ever endure in any of his disciples, it is so contrary to the end of his coming, which is first to sanctify, and then to save believers : “ Think not (saith he) that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets.”

5. He teacheth, that the end of the gospel and covenant of grace is to procure men’s obedience unto the moral law : “ I am come (saith he) to fulfil the law and the prophets.”

6. That the obligation of the moral law, in all points, unto all holy duties, is perpetual, and shall stand to the world’s end, that is, “ till heaven and earth pass away.”

7. That as God hath had a care of the Scriptures from the beginning, so shall he have a care of them still to the world’s end, that there shall not one jot or one tittle of the substance thereof be taken away ; so saith the text, ver. 18.

8. That as the breaking of the moral law, and defending the transgressions thereof to be no sin, doth exclude men, both from heaven, and justly also from the fellowship of the true church ; so the obedience of the law, and teaching others to do the same, by example, counsel, and doctrine, according to every man’s calling, proveth a man to be a true believer, and in great estimation with God, and worthy to be much esteemed of by the true church, ver. 19.

9. That the righteousness of every true Christian must be more than the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, for the Scribes and Pharisees, albeit they took great

pains to discharge sundry duties of the law, yet they cut short the exposition thereof, that it might the less condemn their practice; they studied the outward part of the duty, but neglected the inward and spiritual part; they discharged some meaner duties carefully, but neglected judgment, mercy, and the love of God: In a word, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and rejected the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus. But a true Christian must have more than all this; he must acknowledge the full extent of the spiritual meaning of the law, and have a respect to all the commandments, and labour to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and "not lay weight upon what service he hath done, or shall do," but clothe himself with the imputed righteousness of Christ, which only can hide his nakedness, or else he can not be saved; so saith the text, "except your righteousness," &c.

The second thing requisite to evidence true faith is, that the believer endeavour to put the rules of godliness and righteousness in practice, and to grow in the daily exercise thereof, held forth, 2 Pet. i. 5. "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue: and to your virtue, knowledge; ver. 6. And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; ver. 7. And to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. Ver. 8. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Wherein, 1. The Apostle teacheth believers, for evidencing of precious faith in themselves, to endeavour to add to their faith seven other sister graces. The first is Virtue, or the active exercise and practice of all moral duties, that so faith may not be idle, but put forth itself in work. The second is Knowledge, which serves to furnish faith with information of the truth to be believed, and to furnish virtue with direction what duties are to be done, and how to go about them prudently. The third is Temperance, which serveth to moderate the use of all pleasant things, that a man be not clogged therewith, nor made unfit for any duty whereto he is called. The fourth is Patience, which serveth to moderate a man's affections, when he

meeteth with any difficulty or unpleasant thing; that he neither weary for pains required in well-doing, nor faint when the Lord chastiseth him, nor murmur when he crosseth him. The fifth is Godliness, which may keep him up in all the exercises of religion, inward and outward; whereby he may be furnished from God, for all other duties which he hath to do. The sixth is Brotherly-kindness, which keepeth estimation of, and affection to, all the household of faith, and to the image of God in every one where-soever it is seen. The seventh is Love, which keepeth the heart in readiness to do good to all men, whatsoever they be, upon all occasions which God shall offer.

2. Albeit it be true, that there is much corruption and infirmity in the godly; yet the Apostle will have men uprightly endeavouring, and doing their best, as they are able, to join all these graces one to another, and to grow in the measure of exercising them: "Giving all diligence (saith he,) add to your faith," &c.

3. He assureth all professed believers, that as they shall profit in the obedience of this direction, so they shall profitably prove the soundness of their own faith; and if they want these graces, that they shall be found blind deceivers of themselves, ver. 9.

The third thing requisite to evidence true faith is, that obedience to the law run in the right channel, that is, through faith in Christ, &c. held forth, 1 Tim. i. 5. "Now the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

Wherein the Apostle teacheth these seven doctrines:

1. That the obedience of the law must flow from love, and love from a pure heart, and a pure heart from a good conscience, and a good conscience from faith unfeigned: This he makes the only right channel of good works: "The end of the law is love," &c.

2. That the end of the law is not, that men may be justified by their obedience of it, as the Jewish doctors did falsely teach; for it is impossible that sinners can be justified by the law, who, for every transgression, are condemned by the law: "For the end of the law is (not such as the Jewish doctors taught, but) love, out of a pure heart," &c.

3. That the true end of the law, preached unto the peo-

ple, is that they, by the law, being made to see their deserved condemnation, should flee to Christ unfeignedly, to be justified by faith in him; so saith the text, while it maketh love to flow through faith in Christ.

4. That no man can set himself in love to obey the law, except in as far as his conscience is quieted by faith, or is seeking to be quieted in Christ; for "the end of the law is love, out of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned."

5. That feigned faith goeth to Christ without reckoning with the law, and so wants an errand; but unfeigned faith reckoneth with the law, and is forced to flee for refuge unto Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, so often as it finds itself guilty for breaking of the law: "For the end of the law is faith unfeigned."

6. That the fruits of love may come forth in act particularly, it is necessary that the heart be brought to the hatred of all sin and uncleanness, and to a steadfast purpose to follow all holiness universally; "For the end of the law is love, out of a pure heart."

7. That unfeigned faith is able to make the conscience good, and the heart pure, and the man lovingly obedient to the law; for when Christ's blood is seen by faith to quiet justice, then the conscience becometh quiet also, and will not suffer the heart to entertain the love of sin, but sets the man on work to fear God for his mercy, and to obey all his commandments, out of love to God, for his free gift of justification, by grace bestowed on him: "For this is the end of the law indeed," whereby it obtaineth of a man more obedience than any other way.

The fourth thing requisite to evidence true faith is, the *keeping strait communion with Christ*, the fountain of all graces, and of all good works, held forth John xv. 5. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

Wherein Christ, in a similitude from a vine-tree, teacheth us,

1. That by nature we are wild barren briars, till we be changed by coming unto Christ; and that Christ is that noble vine-tree, having all life and sap of grace in himself and able to change the nature of every one that cometh to

him, and to communicate spirit and life to as many as shall believe in him: "I am the vine (saith he,) and ye are the branches."

2. That Christ loveth to have believers so united unto him, as that they be not separated at any time by unbelief: And that there may be a mutual inhabitation of them in him, by faith and love; and of him in them, by his word and Spirit; for he joineth these together, "If ye abide in me, and I in you," as things inseparable.

3. That except a man be ingrafted in Christ, and united to him by faith, he cannot do any the least good works of his own strength; yea, except in as far as a man doth draw spirit and life from Christ by faith, the work which he doth is naughty and null in point of goodness, in God's estimation: "For without me (saith he,) ye can do nothing."

4. That this mutual inhabitation is the fountain and infallible cause of constant continuing and abounding in well doing: "For he that abideth in me, and I in him (saith he,) the same beareth much fruit." Now, as our abiding in Christ presupposeth three things: 1. That we have heard the joyful sound of the gospel, making offer of Christ to us, who are lost sinners by the law; 2. That we have heartily embraced the gracious offer of Christ; 3. That by receiving of him we are become the sons of God, John i. 12, and are incorporated into his mystical body, that he may dwell in us, as his temple, and we dwell in him, as in the residence of righteousness and life; so our abiding in Christ importeth other three things: 1. An employing of Christ in all our addresses to God, and in all our undertakings of whatsoever piece of service to him; 2. A contentedness with his sufficiency, without going out from him to seek righteousness, or life, or furniture in any case, in our own or any of the creature's worthiness; 3. A fixedness in our believing in him, a fixedness in our employing and making use of him, and a fixedness in our contentment in him, and adhering to him, so that no allurements, no temptation of Satan or the world, no terror nor trouble, may be able to drive our spirits from firm adherence to him, or from the constant avowing of his truth, and obeying his commands, who hath loved us, and given himself for us; and in whom, not only our life is laid up, but also

the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily, by reason of the substantial and personal union of the divine and human nature in him.

Hence let every watchful believer, for strengthening himself in faith and obedience, reason after this manner:

“Whosoever doth daily employ Christ Jesus, for cleansing his conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the law, and for enabling him to give obedience to the law in love, he hath the evidence of true faith in himself.

“But I (may every watchful believer say) do daily employ Jesus Christ, for cleansing my conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the law, and for enabling of me to give obedience to the law in love.

“Therefore I have the evidence of true faith in myself.”

And hence also, let the sleepy and sluggish believer reason, for his own upstirring, thus:

“Whatsoever is necessary for giving evidence of true faith, I must study to do it, except I would deceive myself and perish.

“But, to employ Christ Jesus daily, for cleansing of my conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the law, and for enabling me to give obedience to the law in love, is necessary for evidencing of true faith in me.

“Therefore this I must study to do, except I would deceive myself and perish.”

And, *lastly*, seeing Christ himself hath pointed this forth, as an undoubted evidence of a man elected of God unto life, and given to Jesus Christ to be redeemed, “if he come unto him,” that is, close covenant, and keep communion with him, as he teacheth us, John vi. 37, saying, “All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out;” let every person, who doth not in earnest make use of Christ for remission of sin, and amendment of life, reason hence, and from the whole premises, after this manner, that his conscience may be awakened:

“Whosoever is neither by the law, nor by the gospel, so convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make him come to Christ, and employ him daily for re-

remission of sin, and amendment of life; he wanteth not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all appearance of his election, so long as he remaineth in this condition.

“But I (may every impenitent person say) am neither by the law nor gospel so convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make me come to Christ, and employ him daily for remission of sin, and amendment of life.

“Therefore I want not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all appearance of my election, so long as I remain in this condition.”



THE DUTY OF CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH.

Would we guard against instability, apostasy, and fanaticism, we must guard against that ignorance of religious truth, which is the fruitful parent of these evils. Would we do any thing to realize the cherished hopes of the church, we must prepare for their accomplishment from afar, and begin the train of causes, by disseminating the knowledge of Christian doctrines. That sort of piety which is now wanted, and by whose steady energies the christianization of the world is to be accomplished, must be grounded in the convictions of the understanding, as well as fired by ardour of feeling.

There is still another duty which Christians owe to the system of revealed truth, viz. *to contend for it*, when it is assailed. This duty, like those already mentioned, results principally from the established connexion between the truth and the moral renovation of men. If there is any thing in the world worth contending for, it must be a system so nearly allied to the present and eternal welfare of our whole race. The sublime results to which the doctrines of the gospel are conducive, enjoin an unyielding steadfastness in their defence, and condemn that false toleration by which they are often surrendered. The magnitude of the end for which the truth is revealed—the reconciliation of the world unto God, ennobles zeal for its maintenance, and advances martyrs for its cause to an equal rank with the most illustrious benefactors of mankind.

The defence of the doctrines of the gospel has, accordingly, been considered a sacred duty in every age of the church. The true hearted Christians, in the days of early persecution, loved the doctrines of Christianity too well, and knew too well their efficacy, to yield them up without a contest. Standing firm upon their inmost convictions of truth, they could be moved neither by the allurements or menaces of worldly power. Could they have listened to the dictates of worldly policy, and silently acquiesced in the perversion of the doctrines of Christianity, they would have looked upon themselves as traitors to the cause of God on earth.

How much is the church of later and more peaceful days indebted to the noble intrepidity, the holy fortitude and firmness, of these early defenders of its faith! Had Athanasius or Augustine, not to mention others, quietly surrendered the vital doctrines for which they contended, the Christian world might, to this day, have been overspread with the disastrous shadow of Arian or Pelagian heresy!

There are many who seem to suppose, that there is no longer any occasion for that vigilant and jealous defence of the doctrines of the gospel, which was formerly necessary—that these doctrines have become sufficiently established by the efforts of our predecessors, and that our whole duty lies in making them known through the earth. But this opinion overlooks the fact, that most errors in religion have their origin in the depravity of human nature; and though they may be suppressed at one time, they will again spring up, as long as the quality of their native soil is unaltered. It proceeds, too, on a mistaken view of the appointed lot of the church on earth. “It is but ignorance,” says a great philosopher, “if any man find it strange, that the state of religion, especially in days of peace, should be exercised and troubled with controversies, for as it is the condition of the church militant to be ever under trials, so it cometh to pass, that when the fiery trial of persecution ceaseth, there succeedeth another trial, which as it were by contrary blasts of doctrine doth sift and winnow men’s faith, and proveth whether they know God aright.”

Happy, indeed, would it be for us, if we could believe

that these "contrary blasts of doctrines," had spent their force, and would never again sweep over the church. But one must be very unobservant, who does not see, that there are tendencies of theological sentiment at the present time, which threaten, in their full development, the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. If this be really so, how false and dangerous is that security respecting the doctrines of Christianity, into which so many are lulled by the present outward prosperity and the opening prospects of the church! Should the church of this day, flushed by its recent victories, become negligent of its own defence, and leaving the palladium of its safety unprotected, send forth its sacramental hosts for distant conquests, it could not be long before its triumphant legions must be called back, to recapture their own walls and bulwarks from their insidious foe.

Besides the dangerous tendencies of theological sentiment to which allusion has been made, there are other dispositions infused by the spirit of the times, which are peculiarly adverse to religious truth, and which demand peculiar watchfulness in guarding its interests. That impatience of the restraints of authority—that irreverent contempt of ancient opinions and usages—that restless spirit of innovation—that all-pervading rationalism, which will receive no mysteries unexplained, and thinks to fathom and comprehend even the deep things of God;—these, and other congenial dispositions, which so strongly characterize the present times, are most unfriendly to the pure belief of a system of truth, authoritative in its very nature, as revealed from God, venerable in its aspect, as handed down through a long tradition, and humbling to the pride, and far above the measure of reason, in the sacred mysteries which it contains.—*From the "Literary Review."*

THE END.

16

AN

ADDRESS

TO

THE HEAD OF A FAMILY

ON THE SUBJECT OF

FAMILY RELIGION.

By P. DODDRIDGE, D.D.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION.



ADDRESS, &c.

SIR—You may easily apprehend, that the many interruptions to which personal visits are liable, make it difficult for ministers to find a convenient time, to apply themselves suitably and largely to those committed to their care; or at least, if they resolve to do it, will necessarily make their progress through large congregations very slow. I therefore take this method of visiting you while alone, and of addressing you on the very important subject of *Family Religion*. For your own sake, and the sake of those dearest to you, I intreat you to give me a calm attentive hearing. And I would particularly desire, that if it be, by any means practicable, (as with a little contrivance and resolution I hope it may,) you would secure one hour on the morning of the Lord's day after you receive it, not merely to run over this Letter in a cursory manner, but deliberately to weigh and consider it, and to come to some determination, as in the sight of God, that you will, or that you will not, comply with the petition which it brings; if I may not rather say, with the demand which in his name it makes upon you.

As I purpose to deliver it to every master of a family under my stated care, or to every mistress where there is no master, I know it will come to many, who have long been exemplary for their diligence and zeal in the duties I am recommending; to many, whom their own experience has instructed in the pleasures and advantages which flow from them; an experience, which will

enforce them more effectually than any thing which it is possible for me to say. Such will, I hope, by what they read, be confirmed in pursuing the good resolution they have taken, and the good customs they have formed; and will also be excited more earnestly to endeavour to contribute towards introducing the like into other families over which they have any influence, and especially into those which may branch out from their own, by the settlement of children or servants. In this view, as well as to awaken their thankfulness to divine grace, which has inclined them to the discharge of their duty in so great, yet so frequently neglected, an article of it, I hope the heads of praying families will not peruse this letter in vain. But it is intended as an address to those, who have hitherto lived in the omission of it: and if there were but one such master of a family under my care, I would gladly submit to the labour in which I am now engaging for his sake alone. To such therefore I now turn myself; and O! that divine grace might engage every one of such a character to hear me with attention, and might enforce upon his conscience the weight of reasons, the evidence of which the lowest may receive, and to which it is impossible that the highest should find any thing solid to object.

My dear friend, give me leave to tell you plainly, that while I write this I have that awakening scripture in my view: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name." Jer. x. 25. I appeal to you as a man of ordinary sense and understanding, (as it needs no more,) to judge whether this do not strongly imply, that it may be taken for granted, every family, which is not a heathen family, which is not quite ignorant of the living and true God, will call upon his name. Well may it then pain my heart, to think that there should be a professedly Christian family, whom this dreadful character suits. Well may it pain my heart, to think of the divine fury, which may be poured out on the heads and on the members of it: and well may it make me desirous, to do my utmost to secure you and yours, from every appearance, from every possibility, of such danger. Excuse the earnestness with which I may address you. I really fear, lest while you delay, the fire of the divine displeasure should fall upon you: Gen. xix. 16,

17: and as I adore the patience of God in having thus long suspended the storm, I am anxious about every hour's delay, lest it should fall the heavier.

I will therefore, as plainly and seriously as I can, endeavour to convince you of your duty, if peradventure you are not already convinced of it; as truly I believe, most who neglect it, under the regular administration of gospel ordinances, are. I will then touch on a few of those objections, which have been pleaded to excuse in some degree so shameful an omission; and this will naturally lead me to conclude with a few hints, which may serve by way of direction, for the proper introduction and discharge of the services to which I am endeavouring to engage you.

I mean not to handle the subject at large, which would afford abundant matter for a considerable volume; as indeed several volumes have been written upon it, by divines of different denominations, who, however various in other opinions, agree here; as what intelligent Christian can disagree? But I mean to suggest a few plain things, which it is evident you have not sufficiently considered, and which if duly weighed, may by the blessing of God answer my present purpose. Now the arguments I shall propose will be such, that if you will not regard them, little is to be hoped from any other: for surely the mind of man can discover none of greater and more universal importance; though I readily acknowledge, that many others might enforce them with greater energy and address. Yet if the desire, the most earnest desire of succeeding can add any of the proper arts of persuasion, they will not be wanting here. And I would fain speak, as one who considers, how much of the glory of God, how much of your own happiness, and that of your dear children, for time and eternity, depends on the success of what I am now to lay before you.

What I desire and entreat of you is, that you would honour and acknowledge God in your families, by calling them together every day, to hear some part of his word read to them, and to offer, for a few minutes at least, your united confessions, prayers, and praises to him. And is this a cause, that should need to be pleaded at large by a great variety of united motives? Truly the petition seems so reasonable, and a compliance with it from one who has

not quite renounced religion might seem so natural, that one would think the bare proposing it might suffice. Yet experience tells us, it is much otherwise. This letter will come into the hands of some, who, though they maintain a public profession of religion, have been again and again exhorted to it in vain, and that perhaps for successive years. I might say a great deal to upbraid such especially, on account of this neglect; but I rather choose to intreat to the future performance of the duty; humbly hoping, that, criminal as former negligence has been, a gracious God will mercifully forgive it, to those who repent and desire to reform.

O that I could engage you to this, by representing in the plainest, kindest, and most affectionate manner, the reasonableness, and advantage of this duty! For if it be reasonable, if it be evidently advantageous, there are numberless general precepts of Scripture which must comprehend and enforce it, if it were less immediately supported than it is by particular passages; which yet, as I shall presently show, do many of them strongly recommend it to us.

Consider, sir, for I address myself to every particular person, seriously consider the apparent *reasonableness* of Family Religion. Must not your consciences presently tell you, it is fit that persons who receive so many mercies together, should acknowledge them together? Can you in your own mind be satisfied, that you and your nearest relatives should pay no joint homage to that God, who has set you in your family, and who has given to you, and to the several members of it, so many domestic enjoyments; your Creator and theirs, your Preserver and theirs, your daily Benefactor and theirs? Can it be right, if you have any sense of these things in your own hearts, that the sense of them should be concealed and smothered there, and that you should never join in your grateful acknowledgments to him? Can you imagine it reasonable, that when you have a constant dependence upon him for so many mercies, without the concurrence of which your family would be a scene of misery, you should never present yourselves together in his presence, to ask them at his hand? Upon what principles is public worship to be recommended and urged, if not by such as have their proportionable weight here?

Indeed the force of these considerations has been known and acknowledged by the people of God in all ages; we have not only Noah and Abraham, Joshua and David, Job and Daniel, each under a much darker dispensation than ours, as examples of it; but we may venture to say, that wherever there has been a profession of any kind of religion, it has been brought into private houses as well as public temples. The poor heathen, as we certainly know from the remaining monuments of them, had their *Lares* and their *Penates*, which were household images, some of them in private chapels, and others about the common hearth, where the family used to worship them by frequent prayers and sacrifices; and the brass, and wood, and stone, of which they consisted, shall, as it were, cry out against you, shall rise up against you and condemn you, if while you call yourselves the worshippers of the one living and eternal God, and boast in the revelation you have received by his prophets and by his Son, you presume to omit an homage, which the stupid worshippers of such vanities as these failed not to present to them, while they called them their gods.

Be persuaded then, I beseech you, to be consistent in your conduct. Either give up all pretences to religion, or maintain a steady and uniform regard to it, at home as well as abroad, in the family, as well as in the closet, or at church.

But the reasonableness of this duty, and the obligations which bind you in conscience to the practice of it, will further appear, if you consider, the many *advantages*, which will, by the divine blessing, attend a proper discharge of it. And here, I would more particularly represent the good influence which family devotions are likely to have, upon the young persons committed to your care; upon your own hearts; and upon the advancement of a general reformation, and the propagation of religion to those that are yet unborn.

Consider, in the first place, what is most obvious, the happy influence which the duty I am recommending might have upon the young members of your family, the children and servants committed to your care: for I now consider you, as a parent, and a master. The father of a family is a phrase, that comprehends both these relations; and with

great propriety, as humanity obliges us to endeavour to take a parental care of all under our roof.

Indeed you ought to consider your servants, in this view, with a tender regard. They are probably in the flower of life, for that is the age which is commonly spent in service; and you should recollect how possible it is, that this may be, if rightly improved, the best opportunity their whole life may afford them for learning religion, and being brought under the power of it. If your servants are already instructed in it, by being brought up in families where these duties have been maintained, let them not, if they should finally miscarry, have cause to impute it to you, and to testify before God in the day of their condemnation, that it was under your roof that they learnt the neglect and forgetfulness of God, and of all that their pious parents, perhaps in a much inferior station of life to you, had in earlier days been attempting to teach them; to teach them, in moments taken from labour, or from repose almost necessary for their subsistence. On the other hand, if they come to you quite ignorant of religion, (as, if they come from prayerless families, it is very probable that they do,) have compassion upon them, I entreat you, and endeavour to give them those advantages which they never yet had; and which it is too probable, as things are generally managed, they never will have, if you will not afford them.

But I would especially, if I might be allowed to borrow the pathetic words of Job, (Job xix. 17,) "intreat you by the children of your own body." I would now as it were present them all before you, and beseech you by all the bowels of parental affection, that to all the other tokens of tenderness and love, you would not refuse to add this, without which many of the rest may be worse than in vain.

Give me leave to plead with you, as the instruments of introducing them into being. O remember, it is indeed a debased and corrupted nature you have conveyed to them. Consider, that the world, into which you have been the means of bringing them, is a place in which they are surrounded with many temptations, and in which, as they advance in life, they must expect many more; so that in plain terms, it is on the whole much to be feared, that they will perish in ignorance and forgetfulness of God, if

they do not learn from you to love and serve him. For how can it be expected they should learn this at all, if you give them no advantages for receiving and practising the lesson at home?

Let me further urge and entreat you to remember, that these dear children, whose tender age, and perhaps amiable forms and dispositions, might attract the affection and solicitude of strangers, are committed to your especial and immediate care by God their creator; and he has made them thus dependent upon you, and others that have in their infancy and childhood the care of them, that there might be hereafter a better opportunity of forming their minds, and of influencing them to a right temper and conduct. Can this by any means be effectually done, if you do not at proper times call them together, to attend to the instructions of the Word of God, and to join in solemn prayers and supplications to him? At least is it possible, it should be done any other way with equal advantage, if this be not added to the rest?

Family worship is a most proper way of teaching children religion, as you teach them language, by insensible degrees, a little one day, and a little another; for to them "line must be upon line, and precept upon precept." They may learn to conceive aright of the divine perfections, when they hear you daily acknowledging and adoring them; their hearts may be early touched with pious remorse for sin, when they hear your confessions poured out before God; they will know what mercies they are to ask for themselves, by observing what turn your petitions take. Your intercessions may infuse into their minds a spirit of love to mankind, and a concern for the interests of the church, and of their country, when they hear you daily invoking the divine blessing upon them. Your solemn thanksgivings for the bounties of Providence, and for benefits of a spiritual nature, may affect their hearts with those gracious impressions towards the gracious Author of all, which may excite in their little breasts love to him, the most noble and genuine principle of all true and acceptable religion. Thus they may grow in the knowledge and love of the truth, as they do in stature.

By observing your reverent and solemn deportment, (as reverent and solemn I hope it will always at such seasons

be,) they may get some notion of an invisible being, before they are of age to understand the definition of the term GOD: and may feel their minds secretly impressed with an humble awe and veneration, before they can explain to you their sense of it. Whatever instructions you give them concerning his nature and his will, and the way of obtaining his favour by Jesus Christ, all your admonitions relating to the importance of that invisible world we are going to, and the necessary preparation for it, will be greatly illustrated by the tenor of your daily devotions, as well as by those excellent lessons which the Word of God, when solemnly read to them morning and evening, will afford. Nor is it by any means to be forgotten, that while they hear themselves, and their own concerns, mentioned before God in prayer, while they hear you earnestly pleading for the divine blessing upon them, especially if it be in expressions wisely varied, as some particular occurrences in their lives and in yours may require, it may very probably be a means of moving their impressible hearts; as it may powerfully convince them of your deep and tender concern for their good, and may add great weight to the instructions you may address to them: so that it may appear, even while you are praying for them, that God hears. Isa. lxxv. 24. And indeed I have known some instances of excellent persons, who have dated their conversion to God, even after they had begun visibly to degenerate, from the prayers, from the serious and pathetic prayers, which they have heard their pious fathers, I might add their pious mothers, presenting before God on their account.

Indeed were this duty properly attended to, it might be expected, that all Christian families would, according to their respective numbers and circumstances, become nurseries of piety; and you would see in the most convincing view, the wisdom of Providence, in making infants so much more dependent on their parents, and so much more incapable to shift for themselves, than the offspring of inferior creatures are.

Let me then entreat you, my dear friend, to look on your children the very next time you see them, and ask your own heart, how you can answer it to God, and to them, that you deprive them of such advantages as these; advantages, without which it is to be feared, your care of

them in other respects will turn to but little account, should they be ever so prosperous in life. For what is prosperity in life without the knowledge, and fear, and love of God? what, but the poison of the soul, which swells and kills it? what, but the means of making it more certainly, more deeply, more intolerably miserable; when all its transient and empty amusements are passed away, "like a dream when one awaketh," Psal. lxxiii. 20. In short, not to mention the happy influence it may have on their temporal affairs, by drawing down the divine blessing, and by forming their minds to those virtues, which pave the way to wealth and reputation, health and contentment, which make no enemies, and attract many friends; it is, with respect to the eternal world, the greatest cruelty to your children thus to neglect giving them those advantages, which no other cares in education itself exclusive of these can afford. It is impossible, you should ever be able to give them any other equivalent. If you do your duty in this respect, they will have reason to bless you living and dying; and if you neglect it, take care that you and they come not, in consequence of that neglect, into a world, where (horrid as the thought may now seem,) you will for ever be cursing each other. Thus I am fallen insensibly, because so naturally, from what I was saying of the concern and interest of those under your care, to your own, so far as it may be distinguished from theirs.

Let me therefore press you to consider, how much *your own interest* is concerned in the matter; the whole of your interest, both spiritual and temporal.

Your spiritual interest is infinitely the greatest, and therefore I will begin with that. And here let me seriously ask you, do you not need those advantages for religion, which the performance of family duty will give you, added to those of a more secret and a more public nature, if peradventure they are regarded by you? These instructions, these adorations, these confessions, these supplications, these intercessions, these thanksgivings, which may be so useful to your children and servants, may they not be useful to yourself? May not your own hearts have some peculiar advantage for being impressed, when you are the mouth of others in these domestic devotions, beyond what in a private station of life it is otherwise possible you should

have? These lessons of religion to your own souls, every morning and evening, might be, either the seed or foretaste of salvation to you. Nay, the remoter influence they may have on your conduct, in other respects, and at other times, when considered merely in the general as religious exercises performed by you in your family, is to be recollected as an argument of vast importance.

A sense of common decency would engage you, if you pray with your family, to avoid a great many evils, which would appear doubly evil in a father or a master, who kept up such religious exercises in his house. I will not now speak of yourself, for I would not offend by supposing any thing grossly bad of you. But do you imagine, that if reading the Scripture and family prayer were introduced into the houses of some of your neighbours, drunkenness and lewdness, and cursing and swearing, and profaning the Lord's day, would not, like so many evil demons, be quickly driven out? The master of the family would not for shame indulge them, if he had nothing more than the form of duty kept up; and his reformation, though only external, and at first on a kind of constraint, would carry with it the reformation of many more, who have such a dependence on his favour as they would not sacrifice, though by a madness very prevalent among the children of men, they can venture to sacrifice their souls to every trifle.

May it not perhaps be your more immediate concern, to recollect, that if you prayed with your family, you would yourself be more careful to abstain from all appearance of evil? 1 Thess. v. 22. You would find out a way to suppress that turbulency of passion, which may now be ready to break out before you are aware, and other imprudences, in which your own heart would check you by saying, "Does this become one, that is, by and by, to kneel down with his children and domestics, and adore God with them, and pray against every thing which displeases God, and makes us unfit for the heavenly world?" I will not say, this will cure every thing that is wrong; but I believe you are already persuaded, it would often have a very good influence; and I fear, it is the secret desire of indulging some irregularities without such a restraint, that has driven out family prayer from several houses where it was

once maintained, and has excluded it from others. But if you have any secret disinclination of heart rising against it in this view, it becomes you seriously to take the alarm; for, to speak plainly, I hardly know a blacker symptom of damnation, than a fear of being restrained in the commission of sin.

After this it may seem a matter of smaller importance, to urge the good influence which a proper discharge of family duty may have upon your own temporal affairs; both by restraining you from many evils, and engaging you to a proper conduct yourself, and also by impressing your children and servants with a sense of religion. And it is certain, the more careful they are of their duty to God, the more likely they will be to perform their duty to you. Nor can any thing strengthen your natural authority among them more, than your presiding in such solemnities, if supported by a suitable conduct. But I would hope, nobler motives will have a superior weight. And therefore waving this topic, I entreat you as the last argument to consider,

The influence it may have on a *general reformation*, and on the *propagation of religion* to those who are yet unborn. You ought to consider every child and servant in your family, as one who may be a source, not only of life, but in some degree of character and happiness, to those who are hereafter to arise into being; yea, whose conduct may in part affect those that are to descend from them in the following generation. If they grow up, while under your eye, ignorant of religion, they will certainly be much less capable of teaching it to others; for these are the years of discipline, and if they be neglected now, there is little probability of their receiving after instruction. Nor is this all the evil consequence; for it is highly probable, that they will think themselves authorized by your example to a like negligence, and so you may entail heathenism under disregarded Christian forms, on your descendants and theirs in ages to come. Whereas your diligence and zeal might be remembered, and imitated by them, perhaps when you are in your grave; and the stock which they first received from you, might with rich improvements be communicated to great numbers, so that one generation after another might learn to fear and serve the

Lord. On the whole, God only knows what a church may arise from one godly family, what a harvest may spring up from a single seed; and on the other hand, it is impossible to say, how many souls may at length perish by the treacherous neglect of a single person, and to speak plainly, by your own.

These are the arguments I had to plead with you, and which I have selected out of so many more; and now give me leave seriously to ask you, as in the presence of God, whether there be not on the whole, an unanswerable force in them. If there be, what follows, but that you immediately yield to that force, and set up family worship this very day? For methinks, I would hardly thank you for a resolution to do it to-morrow, so little do I expect from that resolution. How can you excuse yourself in the continued omission? Bring the matter before God. He will be the final judge of it; and if you cannot debate the question as in his presence, it is a sign of a bad cause, and of a bad heart too; which is conscious of the badness of the cause, and yet will not give it up, nor comply with a duty, of your obligations to which you are secretly convinced, and yet in effect say, "I will go on with this sin, and venture the consequence." O it is a dreadful venture, and will be found in effect provoking the Lord to jealousy, as if you were stronger than He. 1 Cor. x. 22.

But perhaps there may arise in your mind some objections, which may in some degree break the force of this conviction, and which in that view it may be expedient for me to discuss a little, before I dismiss the subject and close my address to you. You may perhaps be ready to object,

1. That family prayer is not in so many words commanded in Scripture; and therefore however expedient in some cases, it cannot be so universal and so important a duty, as we represent it.

I answer plainly, that it is strongly recommended in Scripture, and consequentially commanded; as there are precepts, which plainly include, though they do not particularly express it. I appeal to yourself in this matter. When God is represented as giving this reason to his angels for a particular favour to be bestowed on Abraham, because he knew, that he would command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, that he might ob-

tain the blessing promised, Gen. xviii. 19, did he not intend to declare his approbation of the care he took to support religion in his family? And can it be supported in a total neglect of prayer? Again, do you not in your conscience think, that the Spirit of God meant, that we should take Joshua for an example, when it tells us, that he resolved, and publicly declared the resolution, "that he and his house would serve the Lord," Josh. xxiv. 15, which must express a religious care of his family too? Do you not believe, that this blessed Spirit meant it as a commendation of Job, that he offered sacrifices for all his children? Job i. 5. Sacrifices, undoubtedly attended with prayers; when he feared lest the gaiety of their hearts in their successive feasting might have betrayed them into some moral evil? Was it not to do an honour to David, that the Scripture informs us, that he went home to "bless his household," 2 Sam. vi. 20; that is, to perform some solemn act of domestic worship, when he had been spending the whole day in public devotions? What think you of the example of Daniel, who prayed in his house, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, Dan. vi. 10, and would rather run the risk of being cast into the den of lions, and being torn in pieces by those cruel beasts, than he would either omit or conceal it? Do you think, that when our blessed Lord, whose whole life was employed in religious services, so frequently took his disciples apart to pray with them, he did not intend this as an example to us, of praying with those under our special care, or in other words, with the members of our own family, who are most immediately so? Or can you by any imaginable artifice delude yourself so far as to think, that when we are solemnly charged and commanded to pray "with all prayer and supplication," Eph. vi. 18, this kind of prayer is not included in that apostolical injunction?

On the whole, the question lies in a very little room. Have I proved by what I have said before, that family prayer is a reasonable thing, that it has a tendency to promote the honour of God, and the interest of religion, and your own salvation, with that of those who are committed to your care? If you are really convinced of this, then all the general precepts which require the love of God and your neighbour, all that recommend a regard to the interest of

Christ, and a concern for our own everlasting happiness, bind it in this connection as certainly upon us, as if it had been commanded in words as express as those, in which we are required to enter into our closets, and there to pray to our Father which is in secret. Matt. vi. 6.

I will further add, that if the care of family religion be, as I suppose every man's conscience will secretly testify that it is, a proper part of a religious education, then all those many passages of Scripture which recommend this, must in all reason be understood as including that. But perhaps you may be ready to plead,

2. That it is generally neglected.

Yet scarce can you have made or thought of this objection, but you will see at the first glance, that this must turn upon yourself, rather than on the whole appear favourable to your cause. It is the reproach of our age, if it be indeed generally neglected. If it be generally excluded from the families of the rich and the great, who too frequently set the fashion, where they are most apt to set it wrong, let it rather awaken a generous indignation in our breast, to think that it is so excluded. At least, let it awaken a holy zeal to exert ourselves so much the more, as it is certain that no association in vice can secure those that join in it: for it is expressly said, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Prov. xi. 21. So will your obedience be the more acceptable, in proportion to the degree in which it is singular. Were there not one praying family in the whole nation, in the whole world, methinks it should instigate you to the practice, rather than tempt you to the neglect, and you should press on as ambitious of the glory of leading the way; for what could be a nobler object of ambition, than to be pointed out by the blessed God himself, as Job was; of whom he said, with a kind of triumph, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the land, or even on the earth?" Job i. 8. But blessed be God, this supposed universal neglect is far from being the case. Let it however rejoice us, if God may say, "There are such and such families, distinguishable from those in their neighbourhood on this account; as prevalent as the neglect of family prayer is, they have the resolution to practise it, and like my servant Daniel, fear not the reproach and contempt

which profane and ungodly men may cast upon them, if they may but honour me and engage my favour: "I know them; I hearken and hear, and a book of remembrance is written before me for them that fear me, and think on my name." Mal. iii. 16. Nor should you urge,

3. "That you have so much business of another kind, as not to be able to attend to this."

I might cut this objection short at once, by applying to your conscience, whether you have not time for many other things, which you know to be of much less importance. How many hours in a week do you find for amusement, while you have none for devotion in your family? Do you indeed hold the blessing of God so very cheap, and think it a matter of so little importance, that you conclude your business must succeed the worse, if a few minutes were daily taken solemnly to seek it together? Let me rather admonish you, that the greater your business is, the more need you have to pray earnestly, that your heart may not be engrossed by it. I would beg leave further to remind you, that if your hurry of business were indeed so great as the objection supposes, which I believe is seldom the case, prudence alone might suggest, that you should endeavour to contract it. For there are certain boundaries, beyond which a wise and faithful care cannot extend; and as an attempt to go beyond these boundaries has generally its foundation in avarice, it often has its end in poverty and ruin. But if you were ever so secure of succeeding for this world, how dear might you and your children pay for that success, if all the blessed consequences of family religion, for time, and for eternity, were to be given up as the price of that very small part of your gains, which is owing to the minutes you take from these exercises, that you may give them to the world! For you plainly perceive the question is only about them, and by no means about a strenuous application to the proper duties of your secular calling through the day. If you "will be rich" upon such profane terms as are here supposed, for truly I can call them no better than profane, you will probably "plunge yourself into final perdition," and may in the mean time "pierce yourself through with many sorrows;" 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. while religious families learn by blessed experience, that "the blessing of the Lord," which they are so often im-

ploring together "maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it;" Prov. x. 22, or that "a little with the fear of the Lord is better than great treasure, with" that intermingled "trouble," Prov. xv. 16, which in the neglect of God must necessarily be expected. But I conclude that yet more will be objecting,

4. "That they want ability for a work of this kind."

To this I must in the first place reply, that where the heart is rightly disposed, it does not require any uncommon abilities to discharge family worship in a decent and edifying manner. "The heart of a wise" and good man, in this respect "teacheth his mouth, and addeth knowledge to his lips;" Prov. xvi. 23, and out of the fulness of it, when it is indeed full of pious affections, the mouth will naturally speak. Luke vi. 45. If it speak naturally, and in the main properly, it is enough. There is no need at all of speaking elegantly. The plainest and simplest language, in addresses to the majesty of heaven, appears to me far preferable to laboured, pompous, and artificial expressions. Plain short sentences, uttered just as they rise in the mind, will be best understood by them that join with you; and it should on such occasions be our endeavour, to let ourselves down, as much as possible, to the understanding of the least and meanest of them. And this will in itself be more pleasing to God, than any thing which should proceed from ostentation and parade.

I must also desire you to consider, how many helps you may easily procure. The Scripture is a large and noble magazine of the most proper sentiments, and most expressive language; which, if you will attend to with a becoming regard, will soon furnish you for every good word and work, and most apparently for this. And besides this, we have in our language a great variety of excellent forms of prayer, for families as well as for private persons, which you may use, at least at first, with great profit; and if it be too laborious for you to learn them by heart, or if having learnt them you dare not trust your memory, what should forbid your reading them reverently and devoutly? I hope I shall give no offence to any good christian by saying, but on this occasion I should offend my conscience by not saying, that I have long thought an irreconcilable aversions to forms of prayer, even of human composition,

as vain a superstition, as a passionate attachment to them; and if any had rather, that a family should be prayerless, than that a well chosen form should be gravely and solemnly read in it, I think he judges as absurdly, as if he would rather see them starving to death, than fed out of a dish whose materials or shape are disagreeable to him. The main thing is, that God be reverently and sincerely adored, that suitable blessings, temporal and spiritual, be sought from him for ourselves and others, and cordial thanksgivings returned to him for the various gifts of his continual bounty. If this be done, the circumstances of doing it, though I cannot think them quite indifferent, are comparatively of small importance. I know by sure experience, in a great variety of instances, that it is very possible for Christians of no extraordinary genius, and with a very low education, to acquit themselves honourably in prayer without the assistance of forms; and they who at first need them may, and probably, if they seriously set about it, would soon outgrow that need. Both God and your own conscience must testify, that it is neither want of leisure, nor want of ability, that prevents your discharging your duty, but a stupid indifference about it, or rather a wretched aversion to it; the natural consequence of which might, if a little reflected upon, be sufficient to throw the most careless and arrogant sinner into an awful alarm, if not a trembling consternation.

I apprehend that the most plausible objections have now been canvassed; for I suppose, few will be so weak and cowardly, as to plead,

5. "That their domestics will not submit to the introduction of such orders as these."

But as this may be secretly thought of, where it would not be pleaded, especially where these duties have unhappily been omitted when families were first formed, and in their most flexible and pliant state, I will bestow a few words on this head.

And here I must desire, that you would not rashly conclude this to be the case, with respect to your own. Do not think so unkindly of your domestics, if they be not extremely wicked indeed, as to imagine they would be secretly discontented with spending a little time daily in hearing the word of God, and being present at your do-

mestic devotion; much less should you allow yourself to think, till it appears in fact, that they will have the arrogance openly to dispute so reasonable a determination as this. Perhaps on the contrary, they are even now secretly wishing, that God would put it into your heart to make the attempt; and thinking with a kind of tender regret, "Why are we denied such a blessing, when the members of this and that family in the neighbourhood, are favoured with it?"

But if it be indeed as you suppose, that they would think of it with a secret aversion, and come into it with apparent reluctance, if they can be induced to come into it at all; you would do well to reflect, whether this profaneness and perverseness may not, in a great measure at least, be owing to that very neglect which I am now pressing you to reform. If this be the case, it ought certainly to convince you in the most powerful and effectual manner, of the necessity of endeavouring to repair as soon as possible the mischief already done. If there be really an opposition, you ought to let any in whom you discover it, know that your measures are fixed, and that you cannot and will not resign that just authority, which the laws of God and man give you in your own house, to the petulance of their humour, or the impiety of their unhappy temper. Make the trial, whether they will dare to break with you, rather than submit to so easy a condition, as that of being present at your hours of family worship.

I can think of but one objection more, and that is,

6. "That you may not know how to introduce a practice which you have so long neglected."

But this is an objection so very soon removed, that I hope, if nothing else lie in the way, your family will not continue another week in the unhappy circumstances in which your negligence has hitherto kept it. I were unworthy the name of a minister of the gospel, if, whatever my other engagements are, I were not willing to give you my utmost assistance, as soon as possible, in so good a work as the reformation of this great and lamentable evil. Far from thinking it a trouble to visit you, and spend an hour with you upon such an occasion; who would not esteem it a refreshment, and a blessing, to come and inform your family, when gathered together for this purpose, how wise

and happy a resolution you had taken; to represent the reason they have to rejoice in it; and to bless God who had inspired you with it? How sweet a work would it be to perform it, as for the first time, imploring the blessings of Providence and grace on you and yours, and entreating those assistances of his Holy Spirit, which may qualify you more abundantly for discharging your peculiar part in it, and may render it the successful means of planting, or of supporting and animating, a principle of true religion in every soul under your care! Nor would the joy and delight be confined, to the minutes spent with you at such a season; it would be carried home to the study, and to the house of God; and the very remembrance of it would for years to come, encourage to other attempts of usefulness, and strengthen our hands in the work of the Lord.

Dear friend, whoever you are, be not ashamed, that a minister should on this occasion tell your children and servants, that you are sensible of your former neglect, and are determined in the strength of God, to practise a duty which it has indeed been criminal hitherto to omit. This is a mean and unworthy shame, and would prevent our reforming evils which are indeed shameful. It will be a glory to you, to be willing and solicitous to revive languishing religion; a glory, to give to other families an example, which, if they have the wisdom and courage to follow it, will undoubtedly bring down a rich variety of blessings on themselves, and, if followed by considerable numbers, on the public. At least, it will be an honour to you in the sight of men, and what is infinitely more, in the sight of God, to have made the generous effort; and not to make the guilty neglect of former years, an excuse for continuing to neglect, what it should rather be a powerful argument immediately to practise.

But I would by no means insist upon it, that divine worship should be introduced into your family in the particular manner I have recommended. Use your own judgment, and pursue your own inclination; so that it be but effectually and immediately done. You may perhaps think it convenient to call them together, and read over this letter to them; telling them at the conclusion, that you are in your conscience convinced there is reason in it which cannot be answered, and that therefore you are resolved to act

agreeably to it. You may then proceed to read a portion of Scripture, and to pray with them in such a manner as you may think most expedient. But in whatever manner it be done, you will remember, that it must be with reverence and solemnity, and with unfeigned fervour of devotion, as in the sight of the heart searching God. And you will further remember, that when once introduced, it must be resolutely and constantly carried on; for to cast out this heavenly guest, will in some degree be more shameful, than not to admit it. But I hope, sweet experience of the pleasure of these duties will be instead of a thousand arguments, to engage your adherence to them. May God give you resolution immediately to make the attempt; and may he assist and accept you, and scatter down every desirable blessing of Providence and of grace, on you and yours. So that this day, for I hope it will be introduced this very day, may become memorable in your lives, as a season from whence you may date a prosperity and a joy hitherto unknown, how happy soever you may have been in former years; for very imperfect, I am sure, must that domestic happiness be, in which domestic religion has no part.

But if after all you will not be persuaded, but will hearken to the voice of cowardice, and sloth, and irreligion, in defiance of so many awakening and affecting reasons, you must answer it at large. If your children and servants grow up in the neglect of God, and pierce your heart with those sorrows, which such servants, and especially such children, are like to occasion; if they raise profane and profligate families; if they prove the curse of their country, as well as the torment and ruin of those most intimately related to them; the guilt is in part yours, and I repeat it again, you must answer it to God at the great day, that you have omitted the proper and appointed method of preventing such fatal evils. In the mean time, you must answer the omission to your own conscience; which probably has not been easy in former days, and in future days may be yet more unquiet. Yes, sir, the memory of this Address may continue, to torment you, if it cannot reform you: and if you do not forsake the house of God as well as exclude God and his worship from your own house, you will meet with new wounds; for new exhortations and admonitions will arm reflection with new reproaches. In this

uncomfortable manner you will probably go on, till what has been the grief and shame of your life, become the affliction of your dying bed; nor dare I presume to assure you, that God will answer your last cries for pardon. The best you can expect under the consciousness of this guilt is, to pass trembling to your final doom. But whatever that doom be, you must acquit him who has given you this faithful warning; and this appeal, transcribed as it were in the records of the Divine Omniscience, shall testify, that a matter of so great importance has not been wholly neglected, has not been coldly and slightly urged, by your affectionate friend, and faithful servant in our common Lord.

THE END.

MORNING.

In this calm impressive hour,
 Let my prayer ascend on high;
 God of mercy! God of power!
 Hear me, when to thee I cry:
 Hear me from thy lofty throne,
 For the sake of Christ, thy Son.

With the morning's early ray,
 While the shades of night depart
 Let thy beams of light convey
 Joy and gladness to my heart.
 Now o'er all my steps preside,
 And for all my wants provide.

Oh! what joy that word affords,—
 "Thou shalt reign o'er all the earth;"
 King of kings, and Lord of lords!
 Send thy gospel-heralds forth:
 Now begin thy boundless sway,
 Usher in the glorious day.

REPOSE AND DEVOTION.

Now from labour and from care,
 Evening shades have set me free
 In the work of praise and prayer,
 Lord! I would converse with thee:
 Oh! behold me from above,
 Fill me with a Saviour's love.

Sin and sorrow, guilt and wo,
 Wither all my earthly joys;
 Naught can charm me here below,
 But my Saviour's melting voice:
 Lord! forgive—thy grace restore,
 Make me thine for evermore.

For the blessings of this day,
 For the mercies of this hour,
 For the gospel's cheering ray,
 For the Spirit's quickening power,—
 Grateful notes to thee I raise;
 Oh! accept my song of praise.

17

THE EVIDENCES

OF A

GRACIOUS STATE.

BY THE

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EVIDENCES OF A GRACIOUS STATE.

IN the account which the Apostle Paul gives of the institution of the Lord's Supper in 1st Cor. xi. he exhorts the members of that Church as follows:—"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." The reason of the exhortation he gives in these words;—"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." In order therefore to the comfortable, and profitable enjoyment of this sacred ordinance, it is not only necessary that a man should know something of the state of his own heart, but that it should be right with God. For lack of this the Apostle tells these Corinthians, that "many among them were weak and sickly, and many slept." It appears from this that the work of self-examination is very important, and can scarcely be conducted with too much fidelity and diligence.

There are two leading points to which it should be specially directed. 1. The life, or reality, of our religion. 2. Its present state in our souls. Correctness with respect to the first of these is essential to our safety; the second is highly important to our comfort and usefulness. Building on the true foundation, though it be with "hay, wood, and stubble," we may be saved, "yet so as by fire." 1 Cor. iii. But "If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?" Ps. xi. 3. "If we build not upon Christ Jesus, "the foundation which God hath laid in Zion," Isa. xxviii. 16, all is lost. This is a point in the investigation of which all the children of men have a very deep interest, and with respect to which most men at times feel some degree of anxiety. There are very few who have not at times felt this, and been willing to make great sacrifices to have their doubts on the subject resolved. There are however others who have sought to quiet their apprehensions by taking it for granted, that although a good degree of assurance was enjoyed by the Apostles and others of the early Christians, yet it was a special privilege conferred upon them, and therefore need not now be sought for, or expected by the followers of Christ. That such a sentiment would lead men to be satisfied with low attainments in divine things will scarcely admit of a doubt. But it may well be doubted

whether God has tied them up to such a condition. If the people of God, even under the darker dispensation of the Old Testament, understood their election of God, it might surely be expected that their privileges would not be abridged under that gospel by which life and immortality have been brought to light. Paul "knew whom he had believed," not by a special revelation made to him of the fact, but by the application of those tests or rules which had been laid down in the Scriptures for the purpose. These tests have been left on record to enable the people of God to "examine themselves," and ascertain "whether they be in the faith." Hence Paul says to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves how that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates?" This, and many other similar exhortations, are not of private interpretation. They are designed to furnish the professed followers of Christ of every age and country, with a rule of duty of great importance to their comfort and welfare. It surely is the will of God that we should know upon what foundation we are building our hope, and he has furnished us with the most ample rules to do so.

Will you then, my dear reader, whoever you may be, into whose hands these pages may fall, accompany me prayerfully in an investigation which may involve your eternal welfare? If the subject has not yet engaged your serious attention, it cannot be safely delayed much longer. If you have thought of it with interest, and satisfied yourself of your state, but been mistaken with respect to it, it may assist you in correcting your mistake in season; or if you have been truly converted to God, it may serve to confirm and strengthen your hope and enable you to travel Zionward with the greater alacrity and delight; or, if you should become convinced of your spiritual destitution and danger, it may by God's blessing lead you "to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." To this you have the greatest encouragement, especially if the Holy Spirit should be striving with you, which you will believe to be the case if you should feel any uneasiness of mind on account of your sinful and exposed condition; any special interest in reading the Scriptures or in the preaching of the gospel; any unusual tenderness of conscience or fear of sinning; or any unwonted drawings to the mercy-seat. But at all events, let me entreat you to accompany me in this important investigation. It surely behoves you to have some definite knowledge of your state and prospects. You

have an inheritance in eternity and will soon be put into possession of it, either with "the saints in light," or where "the wages of sin, which is death," will be all that will be left to you. But how, you ask, shall I know what my state and prospects are? Your present state and character, if you remain as you are, constitute the elements of your futurity.

1. *One of the distinguishing traits by which the people of God are characterized both in heaven, and on earth, is supreme love to God.* In a state of nature we are "carnal," and Paul says, Rom. viii. 7. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." When God new creates us by his Spirit, he *slays this enmity*, and implants a principle of love in its stead, which leads to new obedience—Hence the Apostle John says, 1 John iv. 19: "We love him because he first loved us." And again 1 John iv. 8: "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." The new creation brings us back to the love and obedience of God from which we have departed by the fall. Hence it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength." This is a well established principle, confirmed by the experience of every child of grace. No matter how much they may complain of the coldness of their hearts, and the smallness of their love, they with one heart, and one voice avow, that they feel differently towards him than they once did, and would for no consideration return to their former state, even although they feel afraid to hope or acknowledge that they do love him; while there are seasons when they are constrained to cry out with Asaph in the 73d Psalm, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

But you ask, how shall I *know* that I love him? How do you know that you love any being or object? Mainly by your feelings towards them. You will think of them often with interest, and pleasurable feelings—you will chide yourself, as if for neglect, when you have not recently thought of them—you will love to converse about them with those who know or appreciate them—you will long for their return when absent—it will afford you pleasure to hear from them. It will pain you to have done any thing which may have grieved or offended them. It will rejoice you that their interest, or fame, or comfort is promoted, while every thing which would derogate from either of these, would cause you pain and regret. And if you knew of any thing

which would afford them pleasure and satisfaction, you would delight in doing it.

It surely cannot be so difficult as you may have imagined to apply this to the subject before us. Do you think of God often and with pleasure? When any thing has for a season withdrawn your thoughts from him, does the neglect, though involuntary, pain you, and when untrammelled, do they, like the needle to its pole, return to him with alacrity and delight? Do you love to converse about your God and Saviour, with those who know and love him? Does your heart often long for the return of the visits of his love and grace, so as with the psalmist to cry out, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so my soul panteth after thee, O God"—Ps. xlii. 1. Do you love the messages which he sends you in his word, written and preached? Does the recollection of your neglect of duty, or the transgression of his commandments, fill you with shame and regret? Does it rejoice your heart when his name is honoured, his work revived, and his cause and glory are promoted? Does it fill you with pain and regret when men make void his law, blaspheme his name, and especially when his cause languishes, and the Saviour is wounded in the house of his friends, by their untender, and inconsistent walk and conversation? Are you anxious to know and do his will, and do you delight in his service? Do you love to meditate on his name, attributes, works, and ways? Are you pleased to be in his hands, and have your lot and person disposed of according to his will? These are no equivocal marks of love to him, and if these are ascertainable, then is it practicable to ascertain whether we love him. Have *you* these marks upon you?

2. Another evidence of a gracious state is, *The love of God's people because they are his people.* This distinction is a necessary one in this investigation, because many of them sustain relations to us and possess qualities independently of religion, which may command not only our respect, but a very high degree of esteem and love. And if we mistake these for *Christian love*, we might practise a fatal deception upon ourselves to the ruin of our souls. For example—Christians may be our near relatives, and of course all the partialities arising from the social relations and sympathies may render it difficult for us to determine whether the regard which we feel for them springs from these sources, or from what is peculiar to them as *Christians*. So also Christians may possess many of those amiable qualities which cast a charm over the lives of all who exhibit them, so that we can scarcely avoid loving them.

In such cases it will be difficult to analyze the nature of our feelings, and determine their real character. But in general it will not be difficult to pass out of the circle of these relations, and influences, and derive our tests and proofs from sources which are not liable to such exceptions and abatements. To most Christians there belong traits of character which are peculiar to them as *Christians*, and in most cases their prominent natural traits become materially modified by the intervention of divine grace. In general, however, it may be ascertained what it is in our fellow-creatures, on account of which we respect and love them. It is scarcely necessary to prove that the affection of which I am speaking is frequently and strongly enjoined, and highly commended in the Scriptures, and given as one of the most decisive evidences of an interest in, and union to, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Saviour's own language on the subject. John xiii. 34, 35, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Hence the beloved disciple used the following language—1 John iv. 7, 8, 11, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." In the following quotation he brings it home to the point in hand. 1 John iii. 14, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." It is perhaps impossible to state the point more clearly than the Apostle has done it in these words.

The question which remains to be resolved is, how shall we ascertain whether we do love the people of God as such? Here again I would ask, how do you know whether you love any person? Is it not from the feelings you entertain for them, and the conduct which springs therefrom? We think often and with interest of those whom we love. We love and seek their company and conversation. We love to commune with them about our common Saviour, his personal excellencies, his mediatorial work, his kingdom and grace, his great love to us, and what he has done for our souls. We shall take a decided interest in whatever concerns their welfare, especially the welfare of their souls, sympathizing with them in their joys and sorrows. We shall feel that they have peculiar claims upon our sympa-

thies, prayers, and help in time of need. It will afford us joy to minister to their comfort in seasons of sickness and distress. We shall willingly make sacrifices to promote their welfare. We shall deal tenderly with their reputation and good name, bear with their foibles and faults, and make proper allowance for their infirmities and sins, as "Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father." No real Christian will ever be found blazoning the faults of his brethren. He will feel much more inclined to weep over them. They will seek each other's good, and never envy, but rejoice in each other's prosperity. They feel that they belong to one common family, of which Christ is the head, and they, brethren and members in common. And hence when Christians meet, no matter from whence they come, or by what name they may be called, make them mutually sensible that they *are* Christians, and give them a common language by which they can communicate with each other, and they will at once love and converse as brethren. They have a common bond of union in Christ their living Head. Of this every Christian is sensible, when he has intercourse with those who know and love the Lord. It is unnatural for Christians not to love one another, as it is for children of the same earthly parents. Some are naturally more lovely and affectionate than others, and they receive and exercise more affection. It is so also in the relations of grace. Grace implants in us no new affections, but it sanctifies and directs those which belong to our common nature. This remark will enable us to apply the principle to the subject before us. True religion is eminently social in its nature; and if it does not make its professors affectionate, and social, it must arise from a defect either in our nature or in our religion. It is as true in religion as in nature that *like loves and seeks like*. This is a binding and operative law, and religion has sanctified it. Wonder not, therefore, that the Holy Ghost should have said, 1 John iv. 20, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." My dear friend, how is it with you? You can find no more ready and safe test of Christian character than this. Do not fail then, I beseech you, to apply this measuring line to your own experience. In what estimation do you hold those who give you good evidence of their attachment to Christ? Are they the partners of your heart's affection, and the dear and

chosen companions of your life? Surely you *may* ascertain such a fact! Can you be satisfied to be ignorant about it? And much more can you be satisfied to know yourself to be destitute of this evidence of an interest in Christ? Never, never will you enter the society of heaven, if you have no decided love for the people of God, and relish for their fellowship, employments, and enjoyments on earth.

3. I proceed to the consideration of a third particular, of a kindred character: I mean *love for the word of God*. The Scriptures contain a portraiture of God's character, perfections, and ways, and especially as he has made himself known as a Saviour. It might, therefore, be expected that all who love him would be delighted with such a revelation of him. We accordingly find numerous instances recorded in the Scriptures, which abundantly prove their strong attachment to, and high and holy delight in the oracles of God. Take the following examples as sufficient illustrations of the point. "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction. O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments. More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb." Such are the divinely attested testimonies which the people of God have borne on this subject; and in this, religious experience, in every age and country, has agreed. No sooner are the minds of men waked up to feel an interest in the subject of religion, than the Scriptures become exceedingly precious. There is much in them to gratify curiosity and taste, and to furnish delightful employment to a cultivated mind. They abound in the most important and interesting historical facts and details. The statesman, the philosopher, the orator, and the poet, may enlarge their stock of knowledge, and gratify and improve their favourite propensities and tastes, and the moralist may obtain lessons of instruction which he can derive from no other source. But these are not the reasons why the anxious mind and the sanctified heart resort to the Bible as their book of books, and which constrain them to cry out, "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. It is sweeter also

than honey, and the honey-comb." The reason is found in this. The truths contained in the Scriptures are divinely accommodated to the state and wants of man, and when his heart becomes quickened by the Holy Spirit, he feels that God speaks to him by the word, and he is constrained like young Samuel to say, "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth;" or like the woman of Samaria, when she conversed with the Saviour, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" When in addition to this searching operation, by which the conscience is quickened and the heart affected, we love the truth which thus affects us, and love to read the book which contains it, or in other words, when there is an agreement between the instructions of the Spirit in the word, and the work of the Spirit in the heart, leading us to read the word with pleasure and delight, we may be sure that a change of a radical nature has passed upon our souls, affording evidence that we have been born of God.

This is so much the case, that it would be a difficult thing to find a soul that had been brought under the decided influence of divine grace, which does not feel an unwonted degree of love for the volume in which God has made known his truth and grace to us. As soon as the Spirit begins to move upon their hearts, they are attracted to the sacred volume. They read it, they love it, they make it the man of their counsel, and the guide of their life. It becomes "a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path." They sing with the poet,

"May this blest volume ever lie,
Close to my heart, and near mine eye;
Till life's last hour my soul engage,
And be my chosen heritage."

Be assured, that a Christian is a lover and a reader of his Bible. It his soul's store-house, from which she draws her supplies. It is his spiritual armoury, from whence he derives the weapons of his warfare. There too he finds those exceeding great and precious promises which sustain his soul in her spiritual conflicts, ministering to him strong consolation in the refuge to which he has fled; and in the darkest hours of his pilgrimage, he finds them to be a lamp to his feet. Is this your chosen volume? Do you love it, read it, and meditate on it with satisfaction and delight?

4. *It is characteristic of Christians to love the worship of God, and take delight in the ordinances of religion.* Whatever it may be that attracts them to the mercy-seat.

or the house of prayer, thither they go, and there they love to resort. This has been known to be the case ever since "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." As soon as Noah left the ark, he built an altar unto the Lord; and wherever Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pitched their tents, there also they built their altar and offered up their sacrifices, and performed other acts of worship. David says in the cxxii. Psalm, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." And in the lxiii. Psalm, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry, and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." And again in the cxviii. Psalm, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. God is the Lord, which hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar." Asaph is equally explicit and full in the lxxxiv. Psalm, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God! For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

So have the people of God, in all ages, felt on this important and interesting subject. While they have felt it to be their duty to wait upon God in the ordinances of his appointment because he has commanded them to do so, they have at the same time found it to be an unspeakable privilege, and consequently they have loved to do it—and the reason is a very obvious one—they were born in Zion—there, ordinarily, the Spirit meets them with the word, and new-creates them in Christ Jesus. There he feeds and nourishes their souls, and trains them up for eternal life. There they meet and love their brethren, and learn to love them more. There they receive the engrafted word, which is able to make them wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There they have sweet and holy fellowship with each other. There, their blessed Saviour is set forth as crucified and slain for their redemption. There Christ comes and meets them according to his promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And there they often find this declaration of John verified to their own experience; "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." There are few living Chris-

tians who cannot recall seasons, connected with the closet, the social circle, and the Church, of which they could not say, with Jacob at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

There are very few of Christ's followers, who forsake the assembling of themselves together, and yet manifest a healthy state of religious feeling or practice; while there are few who love and frequent the ordinances of religion, who are not manifestly seen to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He who loves the worship of God will commonly come to it, as the hunted, panting hart to the water-brooks, and will enjoy it with strong appetite, and high relish. It follows as a matter of course, that they who have no relish for those appliances which God has provided to advance his people in the divine life, and fit them for usefulness and heaven, are either unacquainted with their state and wants as sinners, or else their spiritual senses must be vitiated and sickly. As soon as sinners begin to reflect and feel, they begin to pray and seek. They inquire after the footsteps of the flock. The first evidence that Paul gave of his conversion was prayer. He then joined himself to the people of God, and walked with them in the divine ordinances. No man can live a life of faith without living in the divine communion. And no man can live in the divine communion, who does not love the communion and worship of God. And if he does love them, he will improve every opportunity to enjoy them. To have neglected them will always cause him pain and regret. Let no man therefore flatter himself that he knows any thing about true religion who does not decidedly love the worship and ordinances of God, and seek to enjoy them whenever he can find or make an opportunity for the purpose.

And now, my dear reader, how is it with you? Do you feel this love for the worship and ordinances of God? If you do, it influences your conduct—you improve your opportunities and you have satisfaction in doing so. You are not a neglecter of the mercy-seat nor of the worship and ordinances of God's house. If these are your delight, they furnish a good evidence, and a solid ground of hope. May the Lord multiply them a hundred-fold unto you. But if you are destitute of this evidence of your acceptance, what reason have you to hope that you know any thing of the grace of God? Is it possible, think you, to love God and not love his worship and ordinances in which he is wont to make himself known? See well then to this ground of your hope.

5. The next point of evidence to which I would direct your attention, with a view of enabling you to form a just estimate of your state and character, is, *whether you are possessed of a spirit of cordial, willing, and unreserved obedience to all the known commandments of God.* This is laid down very strongly and fully in the word of God as a test of Christian character, the absence of which should lead any man to doubt the soundness of his hope. "Behold," said Samuel to Saul, when he had offered sacrifices in his absence contrary to the law, "Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Sam. xv. 22. Hence also David says, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Upon the same principle also Christ says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit," Matt. vii. 16, 18. His meaning evidently is, that when the heart has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, men will lead new and holy lives to the glory of God. In another place the Saviour says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." John xiv. 23, 24. The first word Paul says when he is brought to receive Christ as a Saviour, is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6. And when the apostle James would distinguish between a living and a dead faith, he says, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works," James ii. 18. That is, the manner of my life shall prove that I am a true disciple of Christ. This appears to be the uniform doctrine of the Bible on the subject.

True obedience is made up of the following ingredients. It springs from a principle of love; it has a supreme regard to the will of God; and it aims at his glory. The obedience which God requires must obviously be such as he can approve; and he can approve of no homage which is not voluntary, cordial, and affectionate. Even an earthly parent would not be satisfied with the conduct of a child who would grudge him the service which he might render. Hence Paul says, "God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. ix. 7. Hence also he commends the Romans when he says of hem, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of

sin ; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Upon the same principle *the ways of wisdom, or true religion, are said to be pleasantness, and the Saviour's yoke easy, and his burden light.* Every thing in which our hearts are interested is easy and pleasant to us, and every thing of a contrary character is irksome, and unpleasant. It is equally necessary that what we do by way of obedience, should be according to the will of God. We have no right to choose and prescribe how we shall serve God. In that case he would say to us, "Who hath required this at your hands?" He has made his will known to us, and if we would please him, we must "walk in the way of his commandments." This made David so anxious to know the will of God, and caused him so much delight in the study of it. The Saviour settles this point authoritatively when he says, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The history of Paul is a lively comment on this. Before his conversion, he undertook to serve God by persecuting the church, and he tells us that he was both sincere, and zealous, in doing it. But did his *intention* to do God service by it render his conduct right in itself, or acceptable to God? So far from it that he afterwards accounted himself a miracle of grace in that he was saved at last. To be *sincerely* wrong is one of the most dangerous positions we can occupy. We cannot *obey* God unless we do *his* will, and hence we should know what his will is. The natural pride of the heart however, is not only fond of relying upon its own works for acceptance with God, but of choosing the mode in which it will serve him. The Syrian general who came to the prophet to be healed of his leprosy, was no doubt very desirous of being cured, but having formed some notions in his own mind as to the manner in which it should be effected, was outraged when the prophet told him to dip himself seven times in Jordan. He had expected a parade of rites and ceremonies, and hence when this simple mode was prescribed he went away in a rage. "Are not Abana and Pharpar better than all the waters in Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" This spirit of pride and self-will has often interfered with the simplicity of God's appointments, transforming his churches into idolatrous temples, or picture galleries, and making his ordinances like any thing else rather than his institutions. He neither approves nor tolerates any thing of this kind. He accepts of no service which he has not himself prescribed, both as to form and sub-

stance. Our devices vitiate every thing to which we apply them.

Nor will he accept of our obedience, be it ever so correct in form, unless it aims supremely at his glory. God is his own supreme end in all his works and ways, and he requires it of us, "whether *we* eat or drink, or whatsoever *we* do, to do all to the glory of God," 1 Cor. x. 31. We can be influenced by no higher motive, and God will be satisfied with no other. The subject may be illustrated by the quotation just made. One man eats to gratify his taste, another to satisfy the cravings of nature, and another, to sustain life and enable him to fulfil its duties. One man refrains from worldly labours, and frequents the house of God on the Sabbath, because it is the custom of the community in which he resides, or because he has been in the habit of doing so: or because it gratifies his tastes; while another comes in obedience to the command of God, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and loves his courts and worship, and feels that he who renders praise, glorifies the most High God. It is not difficult to distinguish between the various motives by which they are respectively actuated, or which state of mind is agreeable to God. Parents are always best pleased with their children when they not only obey their commands but have a high regard to their honour. And God himself says, "If then I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?" Mal. i. 6. If then we have no such regard for God as to prefer, desire, and seek his glory, above and before all other objects, we do not regard him as we ought, nor give him that glory which is his due, nor need we hope for his divine approbation; nor will our obedience be an evidence to ourselves "that we have passed from death unto life." When however we obey God from a spirit of love, make his revealed will the rule and measure of our obedience, and aim supremely at the divine glory, we shall at the same time enjoy the approbation of God, and have scriptural evidence of our regeneration. And it was upon this account that Christ said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John vii. 17. And if men would consecrate themselves to the divine service, they would be relieved from many of those doubts and perplexities concerning their spiritual state by which they are so often and grievously troubled.

6. The next evidence to which I would direct your attention, as indicative of a gracious state is *a cordial submis-*

sion to the will of God. This respects, and may be applied to, several particulars,—such as the acquiescence of our understandings in the truth of his revealed will as our only and infallible rule of faith and practice; the subjection of our hearts and lives to his holy law as our rule of conduct; the renunciation of our own righteousness and the acceptance of, and trust in the righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of our justification, and acceptance with God; and finally, a sweet, and cordial acquiescence in the will of God, as indicated by the dealings of his providence with us.

The points of greatest difficulty, and which are calculated to try our hearts the most severely, are those which relate to the justification of a sinner before God, and those dispensations of divine providence which deprive us of those earthly blessings which we the most highly value. And these are they to which I would especially direct your attention. As a sinner in the sight of God, you have transgressed his holy and righteous law, and are justly liable to its awful penalty, which consists in spiritual death, everlasting exclusion from the divine communion, and the endless infliction of God's wrath. This doom cannot be avoided but by a perfect satisfaction to the divine law and justice, on account of which God may be just in the remission of the penalty. Such satisfaction you cannot render, nor can any creature render it for you. Hence it is written, "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 20. For it is not possible, that the blood of bulls, and of goats should take away sin." Heb. x. 4. You are then shut up to divine help, if such can be found, and it has been found. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 3, 4. But in order to our justification, we must be made sensible of our utterly lost and helpless condition, renounce our own righteousness, and cast ourselves, like helpless beggars, upon the righteousness of Christ, and embrace and appropriate it, and *it alone* as the only ground of our justification in the sight of God. This we must do or perish, and when we cordially do this, we shall be justified freely through the redemption which there is in Christ; and then there will spring up in the soul a sweet and holy peace and serenity, which the world can neither give nor take away. And, my dear friend, whoever you may be, if you have done this you

are a child of grace, and an heir of heaven. Have you done it? Be encouraged and comforted. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." Rom. viii. 34.

The other point to which I alluded was a *cordial submission to the will of God under those dispensations of providence which deprive us of those earthly blessings which we the most highly value*. That men do meet with trials of this description all are sensible. That they are variously affected by them is equally manifest. Some bear them like Stoics; others are filled with discontent, complaints, and murmurings, and are like the sea, when its troubled waters cast up mire and dirt. While others bow under them with a meek, humble, patient and resigned spirit, and say with Job, when deprived of nearly every earthly good, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 21. Nor are we left in ignorance as to how the Lord would have us behave ourselves under such dispensations, for he has said, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. Be still and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." Ps. xlv. 8, 10.

This divine requisition the renewed and sanctified heart meets with humble submission, and holy resignation to the divine will, under a deep conviction that it is a sacred duty to be subject to "the high and mighty Ruler of the Universe," and under a firm persuasion of mind that what he does is ever best. Grace transforms the rebel into a child, and to the eye of faith the moral government of God wears the aspect of a kind and paternal administration, planned and directed by infinite wisdom, and this produces an assured confidence that all its results will not only be right, but good, and therefore insure the happiness of all its obedient subjects. This led Paul to say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Phil. iv. 11. From this the general principle is deduced that, "all things work together for good, to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose." Rom. viii. 28. When all things are fair and prosperous, it is *comparatively* easy to be submissive to the will of another; yet even then the carnal mind is chafed by a sense of dependence. But nothing except divine grace in exercise, will enable the heart of man cordially to adopt the sentiments and language of the prophet in the circumstances which he describes,—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall

yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Hab. iii. 17, 18. To be thus exercised is the duty of all God's intelligent creatures, but it is a privilege to which none ever attain but by the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit. Paul learned this lesson not of Gamaliel but of Christ. Happy is the man who has been effectually taught it. For while his soul will be blessed in its enjoyment, it will furnish him with an abiding evidence of his adoption into the family of God, who deals with him as with a child. See Heb. xii. 5, 11. And now let me affectionately ask you, how is your heart affected by *the chastenings of the Lord*? When you have suffered disappointments, losses, sicknesses, and bereavements, how have you felt? how has your heart been exercised? how have you behaved yourself? Were you submissive? Did you feel and acknowledge the hand of God, and justify his ways? Did you say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed; because his compassions fail not?" Did you say with David, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Ps. xxxix. 9. And when you reviewed the Lord's dealings with you, did you say with thankfulness, "It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Ps. cxix. 67, 71. So should you feel, and thus should your heart be exercised when the Lord chastens you, and when thus exercised, bless God for such an evidence of his paternal love and faithfulness. Then will he enable you to "glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.

7. Another sterling Christian grace, and which is strongly indicative of a gracious state, is *humility*. "Humility," says one, "is a most excellent grace of the Spirit, evidences the subject of it to be a child of God, and is accompanied with contentment, peace, and submission to the will of God. The sense of the weakness of our understandings which is the effect of humility, is a temper of soul that prepares it for faith, partly as it puts us on a serious consideration of those things which are revealed to us in the word; partly as it stops all curious inquiries into those things which are unsearchable; and principally as it graciously entitles to the promise, 'God giveth grace to the humble.' 1 Peter v. 5.

This our Saviour makes a necessary qualification in all those who shall enter into his kingdom: Matt. viii. 13, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And since pride arises out of ignorance, the gospel, to cause in us a lowly sense of our unworthiness, discovers the sinfulness, nakedness, and misery of human nature, divested of its primitive righteousness. We have the example of our Saviour, in whom there is an union of all divine and human perfections, debasing himself in the form of a servant, to instruct us to be meek, and lowly." Matt. xi. 29.—(Cruden's Concordance, word, "Humble.") With this grace of the Spirit the heathen philosophers were unacquainted. They had not even a word by which they could express it. They supposed it to mean a mean and debased state of mind, than which nothing can be further from the truth, for it is perfectly consistent with the highest style of character. True humility consists in not attributing to ourselves any excellence or good which we have not—in not overrating any thing we do—in not taking an immoderate delight in ourselves—in not assuming more of the praise of a quality or action than belongs to us—in an inward and deep sense of our many imperfections and sins—in ascribing all we have and are to the grace of God—in ascribing to others fully the good properties and excellencies which belong to them, even in preference to ourselves, according to the exhortation of the Apostle—"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. ii. 3.

This grace of the Spirit is an essential ingredient in the Christian character, and if it were more generally cultivated, and exercised with more diligence, it would greatly add to the comfort and usefulness of the individual Christian, promote and extend the influence of brotherly love, and save Christians from many grievous falls to which they are so liable in consequence of its absence. There is both force and truth in the proverb of the wise man on the subject—"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." When a man walks proudly, with his head uplifted toward heaven, he sees not the stumbling-blocks, snares, and pit-falls, which often lie scattered thickly along the pathway of life, so that frequently before he is aware of it, he finds himself prostrated in the dust, with his bones broken, and his person covered with defilement. Have the seeds of this beautiful and savoury plant been sown in your heart? Have you cultivated them with sedulous care? Is it bringing

forth fruit, or at least some of the fragrant blossoms, whose sweetness bears witness that you have been planted in the courts of the Lord? It is the first lesson which we learn in the school of Christ; the first fruit of a broken heart. Dear friend, if you have none of it, you are a stranger to Christ—you have yet to learn which are the first principles of his religion.

8. *Prayer, sincere, fervent, importunate, and habitual, is one of the marks by which every true disciple of Christ is known.*

“Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give;
Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray, they live.”

When the Lord would convince Ananias that Paul was a new creature, he had only to say to him, “Behold, he prayeth,” to lead him to go to him without the least hesitation, and call him “brother.” The work of the Spirit opens an immediate communication between God and the soul, which never ceases while grace is in exercise, till the prayers of time are merged in the praises of eternity. To say that a Christian does not pray, is to say, that he has lost the exercise of faith, or that he has so polluted his conscience, that he dares no longer look to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat; or that his soul has become so besotted as to be incapable of feeling its wants. The man who lives without prayer, is in a state in which it would be presumption in him to profess hope in Christ, or to think well of his state.

Prayer is an employment in which the people of God of every age and country have delighted. It is a privilege which Christ has purchased for them. They draw near through the rent veil of his flesh. His righteousness gives them the freedom of the mercy-seat. They are full of wants which God only can supply, and he has promised to do so, when they ask in the name of Christ, in humble reliance on his merits, for audience and acceptance, and through the gracious aid of the Spirit, helping their infirmities. To suppose that they do not pray, is to suppose them ignorant of their wants, their dependence, and their privileges, and insensible of their obligations to God, for his unspeakable gift, as well as strangers to the blessedness of holding communion with God as a reconciled Father. Christians of every age and country have been characterized by the value which they have set upon a throne of grace, the habitual steadiness with which they have resorted to it, and the holy

satisfaction and pleasure which they have derived from it. This is so well established a fact in the history of true religion, that the reality of any man's piety would be justly called in question whose experience and practice did not accord with it. The question, however, is not, whether you are in the habit of observing the form of prayer; but whether, in the observance of the outward forms of worship, you do actually and truly pray. Do the warm thoughts and earnest desires of your heart accompany your words? Have you in fact and in truth, felt your need of what you professedly asked in words? Have you ever felt as if you were importuning for a blessing which you needed; and as if God were listening to your request? Have you ever felt as if your very life, your salvation depended upon your being heard, and answered? Has it ever been to you, or is it habitually, as if you have had access to, or enjoyed communion with God in prayer? This is prayer. This is communion with God in prayer. "They that *thus* wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." Isa. xl. 31. The man who thus holds intercourse with God need not doubt its reality. Is it thus with you?

9. *The religion of Christ is a religion of self-denial.* And self-denial is both a duty and an evidence. This is Christ's language with respect to it. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke ix. 23. This is one of the tests to which the Saviour puts all his disciples. What is self-denial? It consists in a renunciation of all those pleasures, profits, views, connections, or practices, that are prejudicial to the true interests of the soul. The understanding must be so far denied as not to lean upon it, independent of divine instruction—Prov. iii. 5, 6. The will must be denied, so far as it opposes the will of God—Eph. v. 17. The affections must be denied when they become inordinate. Col. iii. 5. The gratification of the members of the body must be denied when out of their due course. Rom. vi. 12, 13. We must deny ourselves the honours of the world, and the praise of men, when they become a snare. Heb. xi. 24, 26. Worldly emoluments must be given up, when to be obtained in an unlawful way, or when standing in opposition to religion, and usefulness. Matt. iv. 20—22. Friends and relatives must be abandoned, so far as they oppose the truth, and would influence us also against it. Gen. xii. 1. Our own righteousness must also be renounced so far as it opposes

itself to the righteousness of Christ. Phil. iii. 8, 9. Life itself must be laid down if called for in the cause of Christ, and for the glory of God. Matt. xvi. 24, 25. In a word, every thing that is sinful, however pleasant, or apparently advantageous, must be denied, since without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Heb. xii. 24. (Buck's Theological Dictionary, Art. Self-denial.) Such is self-denial, and such the reasons why we should practise it. The Saviour, as you have heard, not only commands it, but makes it a test of our allegiance to him as our Lord and Master. What sacrifices of worldly ease, or profit, or honour, or reputation, or friendship, or other gratification, have you ever made for Christ and his cause? Have you never been reluctant? Have you never declined making it? And what if he should have declined undertaking your hopeless cause? And what if he shall not find this mark of discipleship on you at last? Will he, notwithstanding, receive you? Have you no fear on the subject? Put it there as soon as you can, and brand it deep.

I might go on and indicate and elucidate many other marks by which Christian character is exemplified and proved, for they are very numerous, and many of them are very striking. I might for instance have spoken of faith, and its characteristic marks, and exercises; of repentance, both with respect to its nature, its fruits, and its importance; of tenderness of conscience, as an evidence of the presence, and influence of the Holy Spirit; of deadness to the world, as an evidence of having been crucified with Christ; of spirituality of mind, as an evidence of being under a divine influence; of hatred of sin, as a proof that we have become acquainted with its true nature, and the necessity of being delivered from its curse and power. Upon each, and all of them, and many others, the mind might dwell with profit, and they might have been brought to bear on the great matter in hand, an exhibition of the state of the heart as it is in the sight of God, so as to enable you to prove your own self, and facilitate self-knowledge on one of the most important points which can engage the attention, or interest the heart of a dying sinner—*the state and prospects of his soul in an endless eternity*. I prefer another method, viz:

10. To direct your attention for a moment to the fact, that although the Christian character is made up of a number of parts, or graces, each of which may be considered separately with profit, and contribute their proportion in the formation of the character, as well as the evidence by which we judge of it, yet still the character itself is *one*, and is calculated to make a right impression as a whole, so that we

may form a proper judgment of it. The Scriptures warrant this when they say, "Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new *creature*: old things are passed away; behold *all* things are become new." This character is made up of all the graces of the Spirit. It is not a single star—it is a constellation, composed of many stars. The regeneration, and sanctification of the soul, affect every faculty and power which belong to it. We find new principles, and these induce a new course of action. The objects of affection are all changed. Those which we once hated and avoided, are now loved, pursued, and enjoyed, and the contrary—God and his word, worship, ordinances, and people, have changed places with the world, and the things of the world—and where we found it difficult to define our true position, by attending to a single object, we may find the impression which the aggregate change makes, so strong, as to be convincing and satisfactory. While under these circumstances it may be difficult to find any one of the Christian graces so fully developed as to make it a perfectly reliable ground of evidence, there may be such a change wrought in the whole character as to make it manifest to all, that nothing remains as it was before. He reads new books—he seeks and walks with new companions—he converses on new subjects, and in a different manner—the objects of his affection, and aversion have been changed. In a word, a new bias and impulse have been given to his soul. He is sensible of a change, but whether it is *the change*, is the point about which he hesitates. And yet he can account for it upon no other principle, but that his heart has been divinely influenced. It cannot be the work of Satan, for it is altogether opposed to his kingdom and interests. It would be dividing him against himself. Very much however ought to depend on the judgment which we form, upon the extent, and tendency of the changes which we may observe, and more upon their continuance. If they are the result of a divine change, they will abide, and develop themselves more and more, proving the truth of the proverb, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. Such a state of things is more encouraging, and hopeful, than any single testimony which we could bring to bear upon the subject.

Let it however be observed, and constantly borne in mind, that the Christian character is a constellation of the divine graces; and that although one or more of them may have an advanced growth beyond the others, yet that all of them

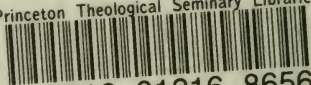
exist in the renewed heart, and will appear whenever an occasion offers to call them forth. For example—if a man love God, whenever he is brought into communication with his word, worship, ordinances, or people, he will feel that he loves them also. This will be found to be the case with the others also. And then as they are more full drawn out and exercised on their appropriate objects, will the soul be better satisfied of its holy calling and be strengthened, and confirmed in the divine life.

And now, my dear reader, after journeying together thus far, we have arrived at the point where, for the present, we must part. It has been my earnest endeavour and prayer, to make our intercourse with each other profitable. I have sought to bring under your observation some of the evidences, the existence of which in you, would go to prove that *you* “have passed from death unto life.” I have endeavoured to draw them from “the testimony of the Lord, which is sure.” Will you now seek to apply them to the state and exercises of your heart? If you are a child of God, your comfort and usefulness, are intimately concerned in knowing it. If you are not, your safety is involved in it. And such are the nature and pressing importance of the interests which are to be affected by the results of the examination, that you cannot be too diligent or faithful in conducting it. You will find it neither an easy nor a light work, and you will need the guidance, and aid of the Holy Spirit in prosecuting it to a proper issue. Follow the example of the Psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know mine heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. It is a question of life and death. You are now inquiring where you are to spend your eternity. May you be divinely guided in the investigation, and may the result enable you to say with Paul, “I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

THE END.



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